

AURORA A. QUEZON

Her Life and Deeds

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A COMPLETE BIOGRAPHY BY
SOL H. GWEKOH
BIOGRAPHER OF PHILIPPINE PRESIDENTS



Doña Aurora Aragon Quezon, wife of the late President Manuel L. Quezon, educator, humanitarian, social worker, and the most revered woman in the Philippines.—Photo by X'OR.

^{col}
AURORA A. QUEZON

Her Life and Deeds

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**To the everlasting memory of my dear Brother,
JESUS H. GWEKOH**

INTRODUCTION

I **T WAS** my original intention to follow soon my biography of President Manuel L. Quezon, which I published in mid-1948, with the life story of his equally patriotic wife, Doña Aurora Aragon Quezon, who had finally returned to the Philippines from the United States of America where she stayed for the duration of the World War II and long after the death of her illustrious husband in 1944. My purpose was to make the Aurora A. Quezon biography serve as a companion volume of my first book, entitled **MANUEL L. QUEZON: HIS LIFE AND CAREER.**¹

But, as usual, in the ordinary course of biography writing in book-length form, many things unexpectedly happen. The search for new and additional materials, especially those wholesome events in her early years which greatly influenced her young life and which were known only to the few individuals who had survived the war but who were hard to contact because either they were living far from Manila or their whereabouts were unknown, somehow delayed the publication of this particular biography in its present edition.

Then, when the manuscript had been brought up-to-date in early 1949, the greatest and most regrettable tragedy in the history of the Philippines happened. Doña Aurora and her party were suddenly massacred while traveling on the provincial highway to her hometown, Baler. So, there arose again the imperative necessity of incorporating

¹A new and enlarged edition of this particular book, in which hitherto unknown materials will be incorporated, will be issued by my publishers, FORTUNE, in 1951, to appropriately mark the 73rd birthday anniversary of President Quezon.

the last fateful events in her life in the biography. The result was, after further painstaking research and diligent study, the final completion in its present form of this biography of Doña Aurora A. Quezon. The biography has been divided into two parts—the first deals with her noble life from birth to death which embraced a period of sixty years, and the second treats of her loving deeds done in the interest and welfare of her own people both in the Philippines and in the United States of America.

* * * * *

I BEGAN writing about the Quezon family shortly after the establishment of the Government of the Commonwealth of the Philippines in 1935. I was then the ambulating correspondent of the pre-war T-V-T Publications, owned by the distinguished Roces family at whose head was the late Don Alejandro Roces, Sr., in the Visayas and Mindanao with station in Cebu City.

My first book on Quezon, entitled, QUEZON THE PRESIDENT, brought me face to face with the great and beloved Chief Executive in the Malacañan Palace on the occasion of the nationwide celebration of his birthday anniversary in 1938, thanks to the thoughtfulness of Senate President Mariano Jesus Cuenco, then the secretary of public works and communications, and to the kindness of the Honorable Jorge B. Vargas, then the secretary to the President of the Philippines.

When I returned to Manila early in 1938, I became more absorbed in the writing of the Quezons, and at every date marking an important occasion in their lives, I caused the publication of my Quezonian materials in the metropolitan newspapers in my efforts to make the people emulate the good acts of and the exemplary traits inherent in the Quezon couple.

Of course, I owe it to both President Manuel L. Quezon and Doña Aurora A. Quezon the rare and signal opportunity given me, together with their select friends, of join-

ing them in their numerous trips to the provinces and the islands, thereby enabling me to gather first-hand information about them. Of Doña Aurora, this book carries her complete biography, although a shorter one appears also in my earlier book, entitled **STARS OF BALER**, jointly with that of her husband. Doña Aurora is also extensively treated in my other book containing the full biography of her husband-President, titled **MANUEL L. QUEZON: HIS LIFE AND CAREER**.

SOL H. GWEKOH

Manila

August 11, 1950



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

TO *KEEP* the memory of the late beloved and distinguished Doña Aurora Aragon Quezon alive forever among her people, I imposed upon myself the delicate and difficult task of writing her complete biography. This is the first book edition of that work. Its early publication was made possible through the kind cooperation of a few prominent personages in Manila whom I have found to be the really good, true, and loyal friends of Doña Aurora both in life and in death. When they learned that I was busy writing this biography, they not only gave me encouragement but also willingly extended their help. I am therefore grateful to *President of the Philippines Elpidio Quirino*, *Vice-President of the Philippines Fernando Lopez*, the *Honorable Jorge B. Vargas*, *Colonel Andres Soriano*, *Dr. Manuel Lim*, the *Honorable Felipe Buencamino*, *President Francisca T. Benitez of the Philippine Women's University*, and *President Francisco Delupan of the University of the East*.

THE AUTHOR



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BOOK I

1.

The Favorite Child of Balser

IN THE Philippines the Filipino woman is an exalted being to her people. She has been their pride long before the men of other climes have seen fit to honor their own women. The Filipino woman, by her talent, skill, industry, courage and patriotism, has proved the equal of the Filipino in affairs and activities be it in time of peace or of war. For that matter, the honor roll of the Filipino women is long and meritorious, and embraces various fields of endeavor.

Fortunate indeed are the few nations that can point to women who are as eminent and distinguished as their men. Such women are Cleopatra, the great character in history; Joan of Arc, the great warrior; Madame Curie, the great scientist; and Mrs. Franklin Delano Roosevelt, the great humanist, to cite a few.

And of these few nations, happily the Philippines is one, for although considered a young nation, acquiring its political independence from the United States of America only on July 4, 1946, when the then President of the Philippines Manuel Roxas hoisted the Filipino tricolor, it counts among its outstanding and peerless women, warriors and pioneers in the past days, and of innumerable crusaders and leaders of worthy causes in the present era.

Who has not heard of Agueda Kahabagan, the Batangas woman soldier who by sheer merit attained the rank of an army general and, clad in a general's uniform, rode on horseback to lead her troops, "looking every inch a soldier"? Who does not know Maria Gabriela, that courageous wife of the equally famous Diego Silang, who be-

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came the "heroine of the anti-Spanish movement" in the Philippines?

As we peruse the long list further, we meet more of the interpid women revolutionists who defied all conventions in order to wage the wars—first against Spain and then against the United States of America—side by side with their menfolk. There are Melchora Aquino, popularly known as "Tandang Sora" and called the "Mother of the Revolution", who, despite her poverty, gave her all in feeding the Filipino soldiers; and Trinidad Pecson, of San Miguel de Mayumo, Bulacan, who fought in the battlefield and who, for nursing the wounded, won from them the sobriquet, "Mother of Mercy", while not to be outdone by his soldiers, General Emilio Aguinaldo, President of the Philippine Republic of the revolutionary period in the last years of the nineteenth century, conferred upon her the title of "Mother of Biak-na-Bato" in recognition of "her patriotism and distinguished services."

Then, of course, for their religious fervor, we have several notably pious Filipino women who, although belonging to rich families, "relinquished a life of ease and pleasure" to follow the hard, thorny but glorious and everlasting life led and lived by the Great Savior, Jesus Christ. Antonia Esguerra and Rosa Prieto, both of Manila, were rewarded by the Roman Catholic church authorities the rank of *venerable*, the first step leading to sainthood, for joining the Sisters of the Beaterio de Santa Catalina.

Another distinguished and pious Filipina, Ignacia del Espiritu Santo (1688-1748) of Binondo, Manila, founded the La Compania de Jesus, the congregation of the Sisters of Charity, one of whose members, Asuncion Ventura, a native of Pampanga, later became the founder of the Asilo de Looban, an orphanage for girls, in Manila in 1885.

Coming down to our own generation, we have, towering high above all her contemporaries, AURORA ARAGON QUEZON, the great lady and humanitarian whose noble life

THE FAVORITE CHILD OF BALER

and loving deeds are in themselves a real inspiration to the Filipino womanhood of today and in the years to come. While of her much had been said and written during her busy and fruitful life and immediately after her death, yet more, and much more, of Doña Aurora, as everybody, those who had come to know her personally or by name, loved to call her is treasured in this her first and only complete biography.

* * * * *

IT WAS Dr. Jose Rizal, the greatest Filipino hero and martyr, who aptly said in his immortal poem, *My Last Farewell*, that the place matters not.¹ How true! The world has seen its great men and women of all climes and times born anywhere under any circumstances. The greatest of all men—Jesus Christ—was Himself born in a lowly manger. The Philippines is not an exception to the rule. Calamba in Laguna was an insignificant town until it gave birth to a Rizal. So was Bigaa, in Bulacan, which is the birthplace of Francisco Baltazar, most renowned of Tagalog poets. Then there is Baler, a little town on the eastern coast of Luzon, which is practically isolated from the rest of Quezon province (formerly Tayabas), yet it has become historically famous for a series of events that took place within a space of twenty years in the later part of the nineteenth century.

First and foremost of these events was the birth in 1878 of Manuel L. Quezon, first President of the Commonwealth of the Philippines (1935-1944), who has been aptly dubbed the "Father of His Country" for his incessant labors for the political independence of the Philippines. Ten years later, or in 1888, Aurora Aragon, the daughter of destiny, was born. Like her illustrious husband, Quezon, she spent her years performing humanitarian services both in the Philippines and in the United States without any thought of reward.

¹ El sitio nada importa.—Rizal.

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The last event marked Baler as the last foothold of the Spanish forces in the Philippines. A Spanish garrison was besieged in the town church by the Filipino insurgents during the Philippine Revolution from June 27, 1898, to June 2, 1899. Not knowing that Spain had lost the Philippines to America, the Spanish soldiers refused on five occasions offers of peace and demands for surrender, and continued to fly their flag for almost a year.

A typical Philippine community enjoying provincial environment and atmosphere, Baler was at the time of the births of the Quezons the capital of the district of El Principe under the jurisdiction of Nueva Ecija. Later it was transferred by law to the province of Tayabas. Passing through the national inter-provincial highway, one finds Baler to be only 241 kilometers from Manila.

The town which started as a mere *sitio* belonging to Barrio Zabali was raised to township in 1609 by a group of seven Franciscans headed by Fr. Blas Palomino. Following its founding, the missionaries took unto themselves the responsibility of converting the inhabitants to Christianity. The original townsite was Kinagunasan on the side of the San Jose river opposite the present location of the town which lies on the mouth of the Aguang river on Baler bay.

One of the oldest towns in the Philippines, Baler has a history which is both tragic and mysterious, and which reminds one of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorra. The name Baler itself carries a tragic meaning for it signifies a place washed away by water. True enough, for on December 27, 1735, about two o'clock in the morning, as the peaceful inhabitants were fast asleep, the sea overflowed the town, and eventually washed it away. The phenomenon was considered strange as the weather was clear when it occurred. Learning from that bitter and costly experience, the people transferred the town to the present site which is one kilometer from Kinagunasan.



*The Belle Amore, photographed in 1903, was the last of
Miss Arago.*

THE FAVORITE CHILD OF BALER

People of Baler love to narrate the legends about the naming of their town. One popular version which has been handed down from one generation to another is that Baler was once written "Valer" as the old records show and meant to refer to the bay (Baler bay) which protects the town during stormy weather.

However, the old folks assert that this town was named after an early Franciscan friar who was greatly beloved by the people for his many and varied religious accomplishments during his residence there, particularly the building of the concrete church. He was Fray Valeriano, so they remember, but was popularly known as *Padre Vale*.

Baler is a picturesque town. To the west it is walled in by the great and imposing Sierra Madre range, while on the east it faces the vast Pacific Ocean. Its beautiful valleys, its green pasture lands, its thick and luxuriant forests, its softly flowing brooks, and its invigorating climate the year round have fascinated adventurers, hunters, and fishermen from all places in the country. Ilocano pioneers have long settled in Baler to help the inhabitants develop the untapped resources.

The old people found their surroundings idyllic and which provided them with abundant spiritual and material riches. The immense and virgin forests gave them wild carabaos, hogs, and chickens, besides flourishing ornamental palms and choice orchids to adorn their homes which they built with molave, banaba, tindalo, and narra—all Philippine hardwoods which were plentiful in the region. Not only were they happy and contented with the innumerable blessings extended them by Nature, but the people were also religious, industrious, and civic-minded. They were likewise hospitable, gallant and courteous to strangers.

It was under this favorable atmosphere of the time that the girl Aurora was born in this town. The place was the nipa house of her parents located on Zamora street. The date was February 19, 1888. Before her were already born

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seven children to the couple—Don Pedro Aragon and Doña Zeneida Molina. She was the youngest of them. Both parents came from well-known families who were admired and highly respected in the community by all—the residents, the Spanish officials, and the Franciscan friars.

The mother Zeneida belonged to a middle-class family in whose veins ran Spanish blood and who spoke Spanish fluently. She had a sister—the attractive, charming and beautiful Doña Maria Dolores Molina who became the mother of Manuel Luis Quezon. Then there was the father, Pedro, who proved lucky in his varied enterprises, so that the family soon was able to expand the conjugal property and to send the children to school to acquire the rudiments of education.

However, the Philippine Revolution in 1898 brought both disaster and misfortune to the Aragon-Molina family. Members of the family, headed by Don Pedro Aragon, were among the inhabitants who were caught by the Spanish guardias civiles following the surprise attack made by the Filipino revolutionists on the barracks of the Spanish soldiers during the first uprising.

Don Pedro Aragon was sent to Manila soon after and there he was kept a prisoner by the Spanish authorities until the uprising ended with the signing of the Pact of Biak-na-Bato. As the conjugal property was confiscated by the Spanish government as an aftermath of this event, the wife, Zeneida, and her children underwent hardships and experienced life as it is lived by the poor for the first time. They, therefore, contented themselves living in a one-room nipa shack and sleeping on the bamboo floor for the time being.

So, when the child Aurora was only ten years old, she and her other sisters, including Emilia the eldest and Amparo, were forced to do household duties: they pounded rice

* She later became Mrs. Emilia Aragon Angara.

THE FAVORITE CHILD OF BALER

in the crude wooden mortar, they fetched water from the river in earthen jars wearing wooden shoes, they washed the family clothes regularly, they helped plant sweet potatoes (camote) and other vegetables in the home garden, and they went out on bare feet to the rice field during the planting time under the scorching heat of the sun.

Even when Aurora was still a child, her elders already discerned in her an exceptional industry in the home and kindness towards her playmates and neighbors. Aurora was not only the prettiest of the Aragon children, but as her name implied, she was also the personification of hope and faith!

As the mothers of Aurora Aragon and Manuel Quezon were sisters, they were very closely attached to each other, and this fact brought about the rearing of the child Aurora by Quezon's mother in the Quezon home on Mabini street in Baler. As a consequence, Aurora became the favorite of Don Lucio Quezon, Manuel's father. Living under the same roof, the boy Manuel and his cousin spent the time in joyful company from day to day and from year to year. In reminiscing on Aurora, Quezon said, "At that time my little cousin was only ten years old and I used to play with her."



2.

The Popular Student

ALTHOUGH BALER has now become historically famous, it does not yet compare favorably in grandeur with the Cebu of Osmeña, the Capiz of Roxas, the Vigan of Quirino and the Camiling (in Tarlac) of Romulo, to mention a few notable places in the Philippines. However, little by little it is coming to its own. For one thing, it takes pride in the fact that its people are educated and well-traveled. As early as 1870 the 1,800 inhabitants of the town could already read and write. Quezon's father, Lucio, was the schoolmaster at the Comandancia of Baler at the time. In those years the Franciscan friars maintained a school for the young children, which was equivalent to the public school of today.

Having been observed to be a promising girl by her family, Aurora was tutored at the tender age of four by Doña Maria Dolores Molina, her aunt and mother of Quezon. Two years later, or in 1894, she entered the school of the Franciscan friars located in their convent in Baler to start the primary course of instruction, after she had been given pre-school training by Emilia, her eldest sister.

Then, in 1904, upon the invitation of her cousin, Manuel Quezon, who was at the time in the government service as prosecuting attorney (provincial fiscal) of Tayabas, the Aragon family left Baler for Lucena, the capital of Tayabas, to live with him for some time. Having lost first the family property during the Revolution and later her father, Don Pedro, in 1901, Aurora was not in a financial position to acquire higher education. So Quezon, ever gallant and generous and affectionate to his cousin who had been closely related to him during all the years, readily

THE POPULAR STUDENT

extended his help so that she could realize her life ambition—to be a public school teacher like Sister Emilia. He spent for her schooling in Manila.

Young Aurora came to Manila to study at the Philippine Normal School, the one ambition of young women in the provinces at the time. She lived in the government boarding house for girls, now known as the Normal Hall, and she was under the care of a certain Miss Colman who gained the reputation of having made girls into accomplished ladies. Excepting vacation days when she had to return home, Aurora remained in the dormitory and pored into the pages of her books. She soon became a bright and popular student. Her teachers were well impressed by her intelligence, so that she was promoted from first to third grade.

A natural love for things Philippine made her extremely fond of the graceful native dances. She readily became an expert dancer of the potpourri dance which she taught to the other girls in the school. In the Philippine Normal School she was an enthusiastic member of the Anahaw Society. She completed the primary and intermediate grades in this school but before she could start her studies of the secondary course, Student Aurora had to return to Baler because of her poor health and that of her aging mother.

Her inability to continue her formal schooling made Aurora very resourceful which virtue she took along in old age. As she hated to be indolent—she wanted to keep herself always busy—she cultivated the habit of reading good books in English, Spanish, and Tagalog at home. Reading matter being very scarce at the time, Aurora took hold of everything that was in sight, and made good use of what she had learned. The result was marvelous. "By reading assiduously good books since I left school, I have learned to write correctly and speak fluently," she once remarked.

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Ever generous, she did not keep to herself the little knowledge that she had acquired. She was not alone to learn, for soon after her return to her hometown, she formed the Baler Reading Circle and Library. The meager book collection which Doña Aurora had accumulated as a result of her being an avid reader since her student days, she shared with the townspeople who with her generous assistance began to learn the rudiments of English.

The Baler Library was perhaps the first private entity of its kind in the Philippines to cater to the cultural needs of the people. In 1914 this collection became an important part of the Malacañan Library following the decision of Doña Aurora to donate it to the Government.

At the same time she started building her private library, which, at the outbreak of the World War II (1941) which devastated the Philippines, had already more than two thousand volumes on varied subjects. Her collection was rich in rare and ancient books on the history, culture, and lore of her people. She had her own *ex libris* on which was inscribed one of her favorite maxims, "Wisdom excels Wealth."

She was also a rabid collector of Filipiniana books, and her pre-war collection was one of the best in the Philippines. So great was her love for things Philippine that on one of her birthday anniversaries she lamented the fact that her friends never thought of giving her something that was genuinely representative of her native land, particularly a Philippine book.

She believed that education would be the best means of improving the social condition of the Filipino women. "Education, thorough education," she said. It is, I think, admitted that the Filipino woman has been graced by nature with excellent traits. She is keen, alert, industrious, kind-hearted, virtuous, public-spirited, and home loving. Give her education and a fair chance, and she will do the rest."

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Besides being endowed with an enchanting personality, Aurora possessed an inexhaustible fund of humor that made her conversation brilliant and fascinating. Despite her brief schooling, she was proficient in both English and Spanish which fact became the object of great admiration by many people, including foreigners.

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3.

The Belle Aurora

IN HER time Aurora Aragon was the reigning belle of her community. She possessed beauty, she had charm, she was attractive and captivating, and everybody admired her for her intellect and industry. The old folks adored her, while her contemporaries undoubtedly cast an eye of envy on her. Whenever there was a social or literary gathering, the people turned to young and beauteous Aurora to grace and honor the occasion. It was their privilege to see her enthroned and worshipped as it was her right to be showered with glowing tributes by the bards of the day. As she had been beautiful since early childhood, young men from different localities came to plead their cause to her. There was no doubt that all her suitors meant well but she, typifying as she did the real Filipino woman of the Maria Clara type, kept everything to herself until the opportune time came.

Aurora Aragon and her cousin, Manuel Quezon, grew up together and having cultivated a mutual liking with the passing of the years, they grew fonder of each other. In the picturesque town of Baler, the two cousins were often seen playing and walking together and caroling to each other in the happy but innocent days of their youth. As they came to know and understand themselves very intimately and affectionately, young Manuel later fell in love with his equally young and beautiful cousin. He admired the charm, beauty, kindness, and industry of Aurora who, in turn, appreciated his courage, valor, intellect, and gallantry.

For years they lived in Lucena following the acceptance by the Aragon family of the invitation of Quezon to

THE BELLE AURORA

join him in Tayabas where he was then assigned as provincial fiscal. All this time Quezon, ever gallant and solicitous of his cousin's welfare, saw to it that Aurora was given the best care and that her needs were supplied. Quezon was so attached to her that even when the call of public service took him away from her side, he communicated regularly with Aurora. Letters kept her posted of his activities and achievements; and even when the youthful Filipino leader represented the Philippines at the International Navigation Conference held at St. Petersburg, Russia, in 1908, he never failed to write her.

As the years passed, Quezon continued to adore his cousin more and more. The passionate lover that he was, he always kept in touch with her either by writing regularly or by visiting her frequently in the family residence. During these years Señorita Aurora frequently visited Manila upon the invitation of Quezon, and in these trips she was accompanied by either Mrs. San Agustin or Mrs. Rodriguez.

In one of his visits to Lucena, Quezon took up the matter of romance seriously with the young lady. The shy but lovely cousin did not accept him readily as he expected; instead, she told him, "*Sabihin mo kay Nanay*" (Tell it to Mother). The answer, which came to him as a great surprise, made Quezon temporarily despondent, desperate, and disappointed, so that he left the home heavily depressed and down-hearted.

However, he never lost the hope of winning the love of young Aurora. He continued sending her letters in Tagalog signed Nonong. Wherever he was, he always got in touch with her. In these love letters could be gleaned the true and everlasting affection of Quezon for Aurora.

Aurora was making one of her occasional trips to Manila when Quezon thought of playing a practical joke on her, as a result of which the lady shed bitter tears. One evening he attended a formal dinner; from there, in his formal evening dress, he visited her. He had intentionally pinned

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orange blossoms on the lapel of his tuxedo. When he showed up in the house, he saw that Aurora had two admirers calling on her. As he came in, the young lady was attracted to the orange blossoms, so she asked him the reason for wearing that particular flower. In a serious manner, he answered her, "I have just been married."

Upon hearing his reply, Aurora suddenly burst into tears unmindful of the presence of her suitors. Why she cried so bitterly Aurora later explained. "It was not because of his getting married that I was hurt most," she reasoned out. "No, I was hurt because he had not told us he was getting married." Like a true Filipina she would not openly admit as yet her feelings for her cousin.

Aurora's delicate health up to 1918 alarmed Quezon considerably. She was thin and pale, and the doctors advised her to go to cooler places, if possible, to regain her lost vitality. Fortunately enough, the Filipino people were then contemplating the sending of the first independence mission to the United States to work for the early grant of political independence.

When in 1918, Quezon, then President of the Senate, was named head of this mission, he did not lose time to invite his adorable cousin to make the trip. The invitation was gladly accepted by Aurora. A maid accompanied her. Although the missionaries left Manila on board the s. s. *Shinyo Maru* on December 9, 1918, her presence in the boat was never detected by the members of the party until their arrival in Hongkong.

On the first night of the trip Aurora seated herself on the deck inhaling the cool and pure sea breezes. Later her cousin seated himself beside her, and the two lovers were left alone for hours as the boat sailed smoothly towards Hongkong. On that night the lover proposed marriage to his sweetheart. The young lady maintained her silence, and Quezon knew what it meant. Although several months before their trip Aurora had been informed by intimate friends that Quezon had confidentially told them that he



The baby Aarona, photographed in 1903, was then known as Miss Aragon.

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was getting married soon to "one of the fair daughters of Tayabas," it never occurred to her that she was the one being referred to. However, she felt happy that, after all, her cousin was to be married and was to settle down. But never did she for a moment think that she was to be the lucky bride after a long engagement of twelve years. Until then she had entertained doubts of the intentions of her already well-known cousin.

The wedding plans of Quczon were kept a secret from his bride because he wanted to give her a surprise of this, the happiest moment in her life. Besides, the proposed marriage was strongly objected to by Aurora's mother although she was his own aunt.

On their arrival in Hongkong the party went shopping first, and then visited the American legation. In this British city rickshaws are used for transportation. Aurora rode in a rickshaw on her way to the business section of the city. Unfortunately the rickshaw man took her to the wrong direction, isolating her from her companions. When Aurora found out the mistake, she immediately told him, "Stop....Stop!" The coolie mistook her words for "Shop....Shop," so he doubled his speed. The other members had to turn around and follow Aurora's rickshaw.

After their shopping tour the missionaries gathered at the American consulate general and attended the marriage ceremony which in Hongkong was called a "registrar marriage" as it was performed by the registrar of the colony. In this simple and unobtrusive ceremony that took place on Saturday, December 14, 1918, the Quezons had Speaker Sergio Osmeña and Governor Maximo Rodriguez of Tayabas as their official sponsors; but as these gentlemen were at the time in Manila, two members of the mission represented them.

Three days later the couple underwent a church wedding solemnized by the Archbishop of Hongkong at the Catholic Cathedral. That was on December 17. As the

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contracting parties were closely related to each other, a special dispensation had to be secured before the second ceremony could be performed.

On their return to the Philippines in 1919, the Quezons spent their much delayed honeymoon in a beautiful home in Santa Ana district; from here they successively moved to their own homes—first in Marikina and later in Pasay city, both in the province of Rizal.

Many years later when Quezon had occasion to recollect the fond memories of his wedding, he wrote:

“On this trip came with me, not as a member of the delegation (a delegation to Washington, D. C., to plead for immediate independence for the Philippines) but as my life partner, the woman who, for twelve long years, had been engaged to me. The opposition to our marriage of her beloved mother and my dear aunt had been removed by the will of God. Aunt Zeneida had joined our ancestors the year before. Contrary to Filipino custom which celebrates marriages at great expense and with pompous ceremonies, my bride and I were married in Hongkong in our street clothes and with the attendance of only the members of my staff. Twenty-four years of married life with the same wife have proved that matrimonial happiness does not depend upon the noise of the wedding. Nor for that matter upon closing one's eyes to the sight of other beauties and running away from their company during the period of one's engagement.”

The Quezon-Aragon wedlock was blessed with four children: Maria Aurora, who was named after her mother but was called “Baby” to distinguish her, was born on September 23, 1919; Maria Zeneida, or “Nini”, named after their maternal grandmother, was born on April 9, 1921; Luisa Corazon Paz, the third child, lived for a short time only as she died on December 14, 1924, and is now buried in the family lot in the Manila North Cemetery; and Manuel, Jr., affectionately called “Nonong”, the pet name of his father as a boy, was born on June 23, 1924.

The Loving Wife and Mother

HER MARRIAGE to Manuel L. Quezon did not change Doña Aurora a bit. She remained simple in her manner, her poise, and her acts. The eminence of power and wealth did not spoil her. She was gracious to the poor and helpful to the needy; she was at home both in her nipa hut in Arayat, Pampanga, as well as in her stately and historic mansion in Pasay, Rizal. Her understanding soul listened to the complaints of all who came to seek her advice and aid. She was as popular as her husband and counted with as many visitors as the latter.

As the wife Doña Aurora inspired her husband in his life-long campaign for the grant of independence by the United States of America which led to the present free and sovereign statehood of the Philippines. Whether in her native land or on foreign shores, she lived quietly with her family sharing with her illustrious mate the burden of carrying on the incessant fight to let the democratic way of life prevail among the people.

Because of the character of her husband, Doña Aurora could become jealous but unlike other women, she kept her jealousy to herself and never had any outburst of it. She could be jealous all right, but she never let jealousy interfere with her work or that of her husband's. They had their misunderstandings no doubt; but in these occasions she remained the reserved and forgiving wife, which trait has set her off as a model for Filipino wifedom. Unlike Marie Antoinette who spent her time in useless frivolity, Doña Aurora preferred to keep herself busy in her farm in Arayat, Pampanga. In being really very faithful to her husband, she typified the real Filipino wife. She was very

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solicitous of him and in spite of her hurt feelings sometimes, she loved him very dearly.

Doña Aurora was the family's guardian angel who not only attended personally to the sick members of the presidential brood but worried very much so that she had to stay always at their bedside. She was also the family's favorite cook, preparing their favorite dishes. She had personal supervision over the household affairs.

She brought up her children in a way very different from other Filipino mothers. Doña Aurora was modern in that she let her children discuss any current subject at the table. But like any other old-fashioned lady she did not allow her daughters to go out alone. It was only after the death of the father when they were already matured that she permitted them to go out unchaperoned.

She loved all her children equally, as a result of which they all respected and adored her. She never forgot the birthdays of her children which were always celebrated. On those days all the members of her family heard mass together. This act became more of a tradition than a practice in the Quezon home.

As a mother Doña Aurora never scolded her children. They were so careful in their dealings with their mother as not to offend her. None could be rebellious against her because she was diplomatic in dealing with them. She could say "No" to them when the occasion demanded, and she meant it. Once she saw one of her daughters at an improvised bar in the Manila Hotel on the occasion of a certain festivity, and although she did not approve of this act, Doña Aurora did not call her daughter's attention at the time, but waited until they had returned home when she made known her attitude.

Before they occupied the Malacañan Palace in 1935 upon the assumption into office of her husband as the first President of the Commonwealth of the Philippines, the Quezons lived in their family residence in Pasay. This

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beautiful country home was furnished tastefully and comfortably by Doña Aurora with antique and modern pieces of furniture. The living room had old and beautiful pieces. As she cherished this home very much, it took Quezon a month to convince her to leave it for the more stately Malacañan Palace.

The Quezons had also a house in Marikina, Rizal, which they called a country home as it was erected on the cliffs overlooking the Marikina river, and adjoining an orchard of mangos, papayas, bananas, and oranges. Quezon himself attributed the beauty of this place to Doña Aurora's industry. In this Marikina home, Doña Aurora cultivated tropical fishes in crystal bowls. She also treasured a big collection of dolls dressed in the costumes of different countries. She likewise took fancy in rare Philippine orchids. Unfortunately, like her Pasay home, the Marikina home was completely destroyed by bombing, shelling and fire during the battle for liberation of Manila and the neighboring towns in early 1945.

In 1930 Doña Aurora built a third house in Baguio, which after many years of gradual improvements became what the husband called "a comfortable and attractive home." Located on a nice site overlooking the Pines City and its Burnham Park, she loved the house very much that she never exchanged it for the Mansion House despite the pleadings of Quezon that they live in the latter place.

The Quezon conception of an ideal and lovely family was voiced by the husband himself. It showed how their own family was administered and how the children were reared. "In the family the mother and father must love their children and sacrifice for them; and the children, in turn, must look upon their parents as guides in their daily life, as the light that will make them see between the wrong and right. It is in a closely united family that I find moral satisfaction," he revealed.

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Doña Aurora was a stern disciplinarian. She believed in training the children well. To her a woman's place is in the home where there is always something for her to do to keep her busy.

She also typified the dutiful wife who could follow the plans of a husband even if he changed them every second. At a luncheon given in her honor by prominent women, she related how once she had to change her plans of sending the children to a school abroad, just to suit her husband's wishes.

"We have good schools in the Philippines but I wanted to imitate others who send their children abroad. My husband asked me to remain with the children. It entailed a great sacrifice. Indeed it was, especially when all the three children fell sick at the same time in Paris, and I was left alone in a strange country, riding forever in taxis that fly, with chauffeurs that invite you to leave the cab if you dare to ask them to slow down.

"I hadn't the nerve to ask him to let us return, and when the President (Quezon) announced that he had paid their tuition fees at the girl's school in Rosemont, Philadelphia, my heart sank along with my hopes.

"Then, two nights before he was to sail back, while I was pondering how I should tell him that I yearned for home shores, I prayed, 'My Lord, I leave everything to you. Do as you please with me.'

"Soon after, the cable came. My husband instructed me to pack our things and come back with him to the Philippines for he couldn't sleep and eat. He needed our company.

"Imagine my feelings when the girls said, 'Mother, that is the happiest decision you have ever made.' When the President arrived, everything was packed and we were ready to go. Thus, one's husband can change plans every second, but a dutiful wife follows his plans."

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Doña Aurora was fond of recalling to mind the childhood days of her children. When she talked of their pranks as kids she was visibly happy. "Baby did this," "Nini did that" and "Nonong was such and such," she would remark as she smilingly related stories of long ago unmindful of the precious time consumed. Of her husband, Doña Aurora's earliest memories were that Quezon was a handsome and brilliant law student. As Quezon was ten years her senior, he would place her on his lap and narrate fascinating stories about the big city that was surrounded by massive walls which was Manila.

In dedicating his book, entitled *The Good Fight*, President Manuel L. Quezon once more made patent his love and admiration for Doña Aurora and his children. He wrote: "To my wife and children whose courage in the presence of the greatest dangers and whose devotion to me and to the cause for which we are fighting, was the inspiration during the dreadful days on Corregidor, and our long journey since then."

In return, Doña Aurora never forgot him even in his death. Of her grief over his passing she once expressed in this wise: "When it is winter I imagine he is cold and when it is summer I imagine he feels the heat." Such was, of course, the natural emotion of a bereaved wife whose love for her husband burned with ardor and pride and who in his lifetime was to her both a husband and a father.

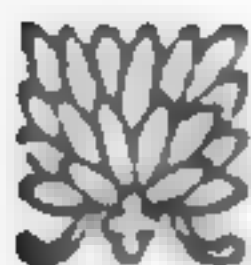
The death of her husband left a void "in the heart of the woman who knew him best... and knowing him, understood and loved him best." How could she forget Quezon when there was evidence everywhere in her home to keep his beloved memory fresh and vivid? Scrapbooks, souvenirs, various photographs and paintings of him were all reminders of him.

So grief-stricken was she that Doña Aurora could not attend his funeral which the great men of the world joined

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in person or in spirit to pay Quezon a last homage, nor was she able in her last remaining years on earth to see the films taken of that occasion.

So engrossed was she in her recollection of him that at her 31 Gilmore Avenue home in Quezon City, Doña Aurora had photographs of her husband hang everywhere; she had one in her former room in the second floor of this house, and in the room in the first floor to which she had moved later because she had been suffering from a weak heart, she brought with her his large portrait in everlasting remembrance.



5.

The Great Lady in Malacañan

ALTHOUGH GENERAL Emilio Aguinaldo y Famy had the signal honor of being the first Filipino to become his country's first President in a Republic, yet the rare distinction of being the first Filipino Chief Executive to occupy and live in the Malacañan Palace went to President Manuel L. Quezon who, upon the inauguration of the Government of the Commonwealth of the Philippines in 1935, took possession of this historic edifice. Before him, former Spanish and American governors general made Malacañan their official residence.

The selection of Quezon, then President of the Senate by his people in the presidential election of 1935 to be the chief magistrate of the land gave the Quezon family the unique privilege of being the first Filipinos to stay in the Palace. Following established custom and protocol, his wife, Aurora Aragon Quezon, became the first Filipino First Lady of the Land, which title she held continuously until the death of her illustrious husband-President on August 1, 1944.

The Commonwealth, which succeeded the American administration of the Philippines under a governor general, was inaugurated on November 15, 1935. The fine, clear and cold morning of that day brought together over a quarter of a million spectators in the largest mass gathering ever seen in Manila to witness the historic, solemn and impressive ceremonies on the birth of the new government.

At the main ceremonial stand erected in front of the Legislative building on P. Burgos Drive awaiting the ar-

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rival of the new Filipino head of the nation were the distinguished guests composed of the high officials of the American and Philippine governments garbed in their cut-aways, army and navy officers in white uniforms, consular representatives with their gold braids and medals, dignitaries of the church in their black priestly vestments with splashes of purple sashes and skull caps, and delegates from the forty-nine provinces in glistening top hats and derbies. Near and around the place and at the Sunken gardens were soldiers and policemen in khaki.

The Quezons were then living in their Pasay home facing the Dewey Boulevard. On that morning President-elect Quezon and his distinguished family heard the six o'clock mass officiated by the Reverend Crosgrove at the family chapel, during which they received the Holy Communion. At 7:30, the President, together with Mrs. Quezon and their three children, drove in the presidential car to the scene of the ceremonies, preceded by a cavalry escort of the 26th Cavalry, Philippine Scouts (USA). At the head of the cavalcade were screaming police sirens who cleared the way.

Upon their arrival at 8:15, a bugle call sounded and the announcer said: "The President of the Commonwealth and the Governor General of the Philippines!" All stood up as they took their seats in the main stand. Behind them marched three flag bearers—one carried the American flag, the other had the Filipino flag, and the third the blue presidential flag bearing the great seal of the Commonwealth.

Then the ceremonies began. Governor General Frank Murphy read the proclamation of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt of the United States of America announcing the termination of the existing government and the establishment of the new Commonwealth. Then followed the administration of the oath of office to Quezon. After Vice-President Sergio Osmeña and the ninety-eight mem-



Doña Aurora, photographed shortly after she became the bride of Senate President Quizon.

THE GREAT LADY IN MALACAÑAN

bers of the first National Assembly had been sworn in, President Quezon delivered his inaugural speech which he finished at 9:30. Shortly after he had reviewed the military parade held in his honor at about 11 o'clock, the President, the First Lady, and their children left the Legislative building for the Malacañan Palace, accompanied by a cavalry escort.

Magnificent Malacañan Palace had fourteen First Ladies who assumed the position of hostess of the Palace during the American administration from 1901 to 1935, when the first Filipino First Lady of the Land came not only to work side by side with the President with dignity and understanding, but also to share with him the honor of heading the state functions and national charities.

These fourteen American ladies—eight wives, four daughters, and one sister of American governors general and a governor's secretary's wife—who are still well remembered in the Philippines for their charm and grace, are the worthy predecessors of the first Filipino Malacañan hostess, Mrs. Aurora Aragon Quezon.

Doña Aurora was a typical Filipino who was neither ultra-modern nor semi-conservative in her ways, actions, and dealings. She was a happy blending of the three dominant cultures in the Philippines: she was as graceful as the Spanish woman, as progressive as the American lady, and as humble as her Filipino sister. "Schooled in the virtues of her elders and reared in the tenets of her parents' tempered religion, and inspired by the lofty ambitions of her husband whose illustrious career climaxed in the presidency of the Commonwealth," Doña Aurora ruled the Palace with "unerring motherly tenderness and solicitude" and was the guardian angel of the family.

As hostess of Malacañan, Doña Aurora held "At Home" parties in the Palace not only for the entertainment of the wives of the members of the Cabinet and the National Assembly, but also for people from all walks of life in

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order to make them feel that the Palace is not exclusively for the use of the nation's highest official but for all the Filipinos. In these parties, Doña Aurora welcomed warmly her visitors, be they prominent or unknown. She stood to receive her callers for two or more hours in the reception room of the Palace where three great big crystal chandeliers hang from the ceiling.

Being an accomplished lady, Doña Aurora fitted well the position that she acquired by virtue of her husband's pre-eminence. She was not only a great lover of art and culture, but also their enthusiastic patron. Besides her manifold obligations as mother of a family and as First Lady, she still found ample time to devote to art. She was always counted among the selected few distinguished women in the Philippines who had given their efforts and money to push forward the development of art and culture in this country.

It was but natural for Doña Aurora to show interest along these lines. In the first place, she was an accomplished musician: she sang well and she played the piano, too. Her favorites in music were the vernacular songs, especially the kundimans and the danzas, and Christmas carols and sacred music, particularly the *Ave Maria* by Dr. Francisco Santiago, famous Filipino composer and pianist, and former director of the Conservatory of Music, University of the Philippines. From a private tutor, she studied vocalization.

Doña Aurora loved folk songs and folk dances; in fact, it can be said that she was a lover of all good things Philippine. Of these she had been patron on many occasions. Like all other musically-minded people, she read poems in Spanish, English, and Tagalog, because she knew that poetry and music complement each other.

She was a composer of note; several of her musical productions were composed during her teaching days in the public schools of Baler. These pieces have become folk

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songs in her place; old men and women, young boys and girls, and the school children sing them by heart. Most popular of them is *Kung Sa Buhay Kong Abá*.

She was a regular sponsor of the concerts of different Manila music societies, like the Asociación Musical de Filipinas and the Manila Music Lovers Society. She also sponsored the symphony concerts of the Philippine Constabulary band which were given for the benefit of patients of the Quezon Institute. To the people of her native province, she brought the first musical concert by noted Manila artists. Any significant work of art found appreciation from Doña Aurora. When the new and magnificent Avenue Theatre on Rizal Avenue was inaugurated on January 25, 1939, she consented to be one of the distinguished guests.

Through art and culture she found the means which created better understanding between members of the same people as well as between two or more different peoples. It was on this simple but practical philosophy in life that Doña Aurora had always been glad and obliging to help the cause of culture. So when she heard of the trip of the Philippine Cultural Society to China and Japan, she dropped the organizers an encouraging message. She wrote: "Your efforts to interest other Oriental peoples in Philippine music, dances, art, and literature will undoubtedly prove fruitful, bring credit to our country, and serve to create better understanding and more cordial relations between the countries visited and ours."

Doña Aurora was a great help to her late husband-President because she herself settled many a case which Quezon could not have decided. Very often politicians who had troubles had to see her first before going to Quezon to seek her counsel.

She did not belong to any particular political party, although her husband was affiliated with and became the head of the powerful Nacionalista party in the Philippines.

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But she had an inclination for certain individuals and groups, and as a party-man she was a very disciplined one. Take the case of Gregorio Santayana whose candidacy for provincial governor of Quezon (formerly Tayabas) in the election of 1947 Doña Aurora had to back up, because he had been nominated by the party, although in the same election she had a nominee—a man who was both good and religious, the two outstanding qualities which she highly regarded in an individual.

She was never interested in any political position. That was the reason why she did not consider favorably the plan of the late President of the Philippines Manuel Roxas who, as head of the Liberal party, wanted to draft her as one of the candidates for senator in the election of 1946.

As a politician Doña Aurora was indeed very shrewd, powerful, and influential. She had her own choices for candidates. None of the candidates she put up in all the elections ever lost, for she worked personally for them, and even went to the extent of campaigning in their favor. When Manuel Roxas was the official candidate of the Liberals for president in 1946, she went out to stump for him. She did not only meet her people, talk to them individually, but even delivered speeches in three languages—Tagalog, Spanish, and English.



6.

The World War Volunteer

THE DOVE of peace was reigning supreme and unmolested in the Philippines, the people were living happily and contentedly, and the country was in a state of prosperity and abundance when the Greater East Asia war broke out in the Philippines on December 8, 1941, as a result of the unexpected air raids conducted by the Japanese enemy on several strategic military installations of the United States army in the archipelago.

To the surprise attack the people promptly reacted with a show of anger coupled with condemnation, for they never thought that the Japanese militarists who then formed a powerful clique in their country would ever start their unwarranted invasion of the South Asian region with the Philippines which had been a haven to their enterprising and adventurous nationals.

On that fateful day Doña Aurora was in her farmstead in Arayat, Pampanga, "busy making of it a sort of model farm and, at the same time, a profitable investment." It was her husband who was in Baguio then who first broke the news about the hostilities to her. "I gave my wife the bad news and advised her not to worry about it for everything would come out well in the end. I told her also that I was driving down that night to take her and the children to Manila with me," the late President Manuel L. Quezon recollected.

As soon as Quezon had returned to Manila and was through with an important conference with General Douglas MacArthur, commanding general of the United States armed forces in the Philippines at the time, in which it

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was decided that Quezon should transfer to Corregidor together with him and other high Filipino government officials, Quezon sought the advice of his wife. Of the decision of Doña Aurora, he related:

"When I got home, I called my wife aside and repeated to her everything that General MacArthur had told me. I wanted her advice. She felt that it would be very painful to leave and be away from our people. 'But this is war,' she said, 'total war—and the Military Commander should know better what should be done to win it.'

"The winning of the war', Mrs. Quezon added, 'is the only question before us. Nothing else matters.'

"I agreed. She had put her finger on the right spot.

"How about you and the children—will you come with me?" I inquired. Instead of answering my question she asked me another: 'What do you want us to do?'

"I want you to remain here. The Japanese will respect you and treat you with every consideration. I have always dealt with their nationals in the Philippines with courtesy and justice. And you have done the same.

"Mrs. Quezon answered: 'I shall do as you wish, but my preference is to be with you. Remember the sacred words, "For better or for worse, in sickness or in health till death doth us part....."'

"However,' she counselled, 'let us think the matter over tonight and tomorrow we should hear what our children have to say. They are grown up enough to be heard.'"

The trip to Corregidor was made in the afternoon of December 24 when the fall of Manila to the enemy was already considered "imminent and inevitable." In Corregidor Major General George C. Moore, commanding general of the United States army unit in that fort, gave Quezon and

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other male members of his staff quarters in the tunnel separate from that assigned to his wife and daughters who shared the same lateral with Mrs. Francis B. Sayre, wife of the United States high commissioner to the Philippines, and some American ladies. Every night before they went to bed, Quezon kissed his wife and children, saying to the former, "Good night, sweetheart."

It was shortly before noon of December 29, 1941, that they had the first bombardment from the air in Corregidor. As the days passed the enemy gained much headway in its assaults which gave the USAFFE high command only one alternative: surrender. But before the fall of Corregidor to the invaders was consummated, the Quezons had already left the fort safely to enable them to make the trip to the United States of America where the President was to transfer the seat of the Commonwealth government and he was to be the symbol of redemption of the Philippines.

The departure from Corregidor on February 20, 1942, was indeed dramatic. It was to signal the start of the long odyssey from the island fortress to Washington, D. C. The journey was full of dangers. At times it was thrilling, but at other times it was hardly bearable.

In this trip Quezon was accompanied by Doña Aurora and their three children: Maria Aurora, Maria Zeneida, and Manuel, Jr. It was a submarine that took them away from Manila to the Visayan islands, from where they boarded a P-T boat to reach Mindanao. It took the P-T boat four hours to make the trip. During these hazardous hours, Doña Aurora, in the company of Fr. Pacifico Ortiz, the Quezon spiritual adviser, said her prayers continuously in the chartroom of the vessel which had Ensign George Cox as skipper. Then a large flying fortress hopped them to Australia. From Melbourne, Australia, the Quezons were passengers in the s. s. *President Coolidge* for the crossing of the vast Pacific ocean. They arrived in San Francisco, California, on May 8, 1942, after an uneventful voyage of 18 days.

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Doña Aurora was always hardworking and devoted not only to her family but also to her country and to God. As the living symbol of Filipino womanhood during the war years, Doña Aurora shared the perils which her brave and illustrious husband underwent while the Philippines was in a most critical situation. And although she did not bear a gun with which to fight the common enemy, yet it can be said that like the soldiers, she was at the front lines for she played mother to thousands of Filipinos who had to look up to her for comfort and inspiration in those hazardous times.

In the United States of America, Doña Aurora helped her husband-President carry on the heavy burden in the long and ceaseless fight of driving away the enemy from the Philippines, thereby restoring once more to her people the democratic way of life which was introduced by altruistic American leaders.

For sometime the Quezons stayed in southern California, occupying the house of their friend, Mrs. Pilar Hidalgo-Lim, widow of the famous Filipino general, Vicente Lim. Doña Aurora enjoyed her days here for the pleasant climate of the place charmed her.

To keep herself busy in the allied war efforts, Doña Aurora volunteered to be a worker in the blood donor service of the American Red Cross. In this work she did not only prove very helpful but also became the inspiration of many American and Filipino women who, like her, gave their time and efforts generously and freely to a worthy cause.

At the suggestion of the *Washington Post*, an influential and popular American newspaper, an "Avenge Bataan" drive for war bonds was launched in the United States of America. As the First Lady of the Philippines, Doña Aurora officially opened the "Avenge Bataan Week" when on February 2, 1944, she purchased the first bonds in the name of her family. Like all other persons who bought bonds



Dolores Delaney needed to sell at all conceivable parties to reach the popular imagination then at her social or at service projects. So broadened her speeches and appeals wherever necessary.

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during the campaign, she signed the scroll which, by direction of President Quezon, was given "a place of honor in my country."

Besides the self-imposed duties which Doña Aurora had embraced as a volunteer war worker, she had also to look after the delicate health of her husband. When the World War II broke out, Quezon was already a sick man, having had recurrent attacks of tuberculosis. His illness, however, worsened during his residence in the United States of America, so that his physicians had to adopt extreme precautionary measures in his last days of life. He died at Saranac Lake, in New York, on August 1, 1944.

At the time of his untimely death, Doña Aurora was at the little Roman Catholic chapel just a stone's throw from their house attending an early mass with the children. His death left in Doña Aurora a void that could never be replaced, and made her assume the duties of the head of the Quezon brood. The widow and her children stayed by his side even in death for almost two years, when they decided to return to the Philippines to be with their old friends and relatives once more. But the trip home was made only after Doña Aurora had received assurances from President of the Philippines Sergio Osmeña¹ that since everything had returned to normal in the country, the mortal remains of the late President Quezon could be shipped back for a permanent rest in the land which he had loved so much and for which he gave the best years of his earthly life to see it enjoy its freedom.

Her return to Manila was an occasion of happy reunion with the people whom she had deeply endeared in life.

¹Sergio Osmeña was President of the Philippine Commonwealth from 1944 to 1946.

7.

The Fate of the Martyr

THURSDAY, APRIL 28, 1949, would have passed out as a quiet but hot day in the Philippines as all other days of the summer months are from year to year had it not been for the brutal killing of the Quezon party, headed by Doña Aurora, in a desolate, wild and dangerous spot in the national highway shortly before noon. As the merciless murder was perpetuated about 168 kilometers away from Manila, the capital city of the Philippines, nothing was known about the fateful event until late in the afternoon when the metropolitan newspapers issued their first "extra" closely followed by a second, and the radio broadcasting stations made special news flashes at regular intervals of the tragedy.

The *Manila Times Extra* of that day carried the banner, DÑA. AURORA, BABY QUEZON, EIGHT OTHERS, KILLED BY HUKS, while the *Evening Chronicle Extra* ran this streamer, HUKS KILL MRS. QUEZON, BABY QUEZON AND MAYOR BERNARDO. Both the newspaper readers and the radio listeners were stunned, shocked by the news! They could not believe it at first, but it was the truth and the fact that the dastardly crime was consummated, as it had been planned out days previous, to no other than the "most revered and beloved woman in the Philippines"—Doña Aurora Aragon Quezon. The news of the wanton massacre of the Quezons which spread like cogon fire shocked the country from the highest magistrate of the land to the humblest citizen. Everyone showed deep concern and indignation. The people cried for action, prompt action, for the speedy apprehension of the ruthless band of criminals.

THE FATE OF THE MARTYR

The Quezon party of thirty-eight persons was in a motorcade of ten cars and two jeeps bearing Constabulary officers and soldiers on security detail. They were bound for Baler, the hometown of the Quezons which is located in the remote northern strip of Quezon province, to witness the ceremonies for the unveiling of the historical marker at the birthplace of the late President Manuel L. Quezon, to inaugurate the Baler memorial hospital, and to attend the traditional town fiesta.

On that particular day Doña Aurora woke up very early in the morning and, together with her daughter, Maria Aurora (Baby), she heard an early mass and received the Holy Communion. In her preparation for this trip, she did not forget to place her old rosary into her bag as she always subscribed to the belief that this rosary, with several beads already missing and which she had inherited from her mother, had great power against harm as had been demonstrated many a time in the past.

The party left the Quezon home on Gilmore Avenue in Quezon City as early as 5:30 o'clock in the morning of that eventful day. It was due to return after May 2 as Doña Aurora wanted to attend on that day the celebration marking the second anniversary of the rebuilding of the Baler Catholic church which was mainly done through her help. It proceeded directly to Cabanatuan, capital of Nueva Ecija, and upon reaching Calaanan, near the junction of the road branching to Bituloc in Laur, inquiries were made from the Constabulary personnel stationed therein as to whether or not the way from there to Baler was safe. As they were assured that "the road was comparatively clear of possible danger from the dissidents," the party continued the trip.

At about 10:30 a. m., the motorcade was crossing the Nueva Ecija border on the steep winding road leading to Quezon province. As they reached the Villa Aurora bend of that solitary place whose thick underbrush and tall,

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shaggy trees made it an ideal site for ambushes, a man armed with a rifle planted himself in the middle of the road and menacingly motioned them to stop. When the leading car was about 15 feet from the man, Mayor Ponciano A. Bernardo¹ of Quezon City, sensing some danger ahead, got out of it, then raised his hands in token of surrender and shouted in Tagalog, "This is Mrs. Quezon's party." His plea, however, was only answered by an intense attack concentrated on his car,² resulting in the death in cold blood of all, except Major General Rafael Jalandoni, retired chief-of-staff of the Armed Forces of the Philip-

¹Born of poor parents on December 2, 1905, in Santa Rosa, Nueva Ecija, Ponciano A. Bernardo worked not only to go through school but also to help support his family. In school, Bernardo was always an honor student. He finished his elementary schooling in Santa Rosa, Nueva Ecija, and was graduated with honors from the high school in San Isidro, also in Nueva Ecija, in 1923. In 1927 he was graduated from the University of the Philippines and was conferred the degree of bachelor of science in civil engineering. He passed the board examinations in the same year, obtaining the third highest rating among the successful candidates.

Bernardo held various positions in the government. From 1924 to 1926 he was an engineer's assistant in the Bureau of Public Works. From 1929 to 1932, he was assistant civil engineer in Tayabas. He was later elevated to the position of district engineer of Tayabas, a position he held until 1937. In the later part of 1937, Bernardo was assistant city engineer of Baguio. While in Baguio, Bernardo did much toward the development and beautification of the summer capital, resulting in his promotion to district engineer of Antique in 1939.

In 1940, the late President Quezon appointed Bernardo as "project" engineer to work on Mrs. Quezon's pet project—the building of Quezon City—at the same time designating him vice-mayor of Quezon City.

During the Japanese occupation, Bernardo was imprisoned in Fort Santiago on suspicion of being a guerrilla. He stayed in Fort Santiago for five months. After liberation he was appointed manager of the ECA, and in 1947 he was named mayor and city engineer of Quezon City. Bernardo was also a member of the Capital Site Planning Commission. He was the president of the local chapter of the UP Alumni Association in Quezon City.

Bernardo is survived by his wife, the former Josefina Martinez of Quezon province, and eight children: Carolina, 18; Josefina, 17; Ponciano, Jr., 15; Emmanuel, 14; Juliet, 12; Reynaldo, 10; Marie Chu, 8; and Cherry, 6.—From the *Evening News*, 1949.

²The bullet-ridden death car has been preserved as an object of historical interest.

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pires. Shot dead himself, Bernardo's body fell from where he had stood and was soon covered with thick dust. When Jalandoni regained consciousness later, he found the lifeless bodies of Doña Aurora and her daughter, Maria Aurora, piled on top of him. The wounds inflicted in her head caused the instant death of Doña Aurora.

The locale of the sneak attack was the bend on the national highway at Kilometer 168 (from Manila), a site admittedly considered a treacherous terrain of the Sierra Madre range.³

Desiring to avoid the cloud of dust from the dirt road, Doña Aurora preferred to be ahead of the other cars—ahead even of the security guards' jeeps. In Mayor Bernardo's Buick sedan, between Jalandoni on the right and Bernardo on the left, Doña Aurora sat, with no thought of danger. At the driver's seat were, from left, Lieut.-Col. Antonio San Agustin, assistant manager of the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office, who was at the steering wheel, Felipe Buencamino III, and Maria Aurora (Baby) Quezon.

So sudden was the attack of a heavy hail of machine-gun bullets on the party that the escort guards did not have time to fire back even a single shot. Everybody immediately scampered for safety.

The dissidents, totalling about 100 heavily armed jungle fighters, were strategically deployed about 15 meters further on the high embankments of the zigzag road which was firmly barricaded of cut timber. They continued firing from all directions on the different cars as these approached the bend until the arrival of the re-enforcement

The site where Mrs. Aurora Aragon Quezon was murdered has been converted by President of the Philippines Elpidio Quirino into a national forest reserve to be known as the Aurora Memorial Park. (Malacañan Press Release No. 459, April 30, 1949).

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of Constabulary soldiers from Nueva Ecija when they started to flee to the forests and disperse in small groups.⁴

The ambushers were later identified by the drivers and passengers of several trucks to be a gang of marauders. The former were herded together under a tree about 200 meters from the spot where Doña Aurora was murdered and detained until the attack on the Quezon party was over, when one member of the gang told them, "Go now as your white-haired Mrs. Quezon is already dead."

From their victims the dissidents stole whatever they could. Robbed from Doña Aurora were her money and all the jewelry she wore—an engagement ring, a wedding ring, a diamond studded wrist watch, and a necklace closely resembling the rosary beads. Later the Constabulary recovered her bullet-ridden residence certificate for the year 1945 when taken from the body of an unidentified dissident during an operation of the famous Nenita commandoes in Nueva Ecija on the lawless elements, and a black bag of alligator skin which still contained the unfinished bedspread which she had started to knit in Manila.

News of the tragedy was immediately communicated to the surviving children. Maria Zeneida (Nini), who was first contacted at her Gilmore Avenue home, was prostrate with shock upon getting the information. She in turn notified her brother, Manuel, Jr. (Nonong), then vacationing at

⁴Known dead from the ambushade were 12, namely, Mrs. Quezon, Maria Aurora (Baby) Quezon, Felipe Buencamino III, Mayor Ponciano A. Bernardo of Quezon City, Col. Primitivo San Agustin, Lieut. Col. Antonio San Agustin, Lieut. Diosdado Lasam, Lieut. D. M. Arabejo, Juan Molina, Pedro Payumo (Mrs. Quezon's cook), Cpl. Quirino Almarines and Pfc. Brigido Valdez. Among the 26 survivors, three were wounded—Major General Rafael Jalandoni, Capt. Olimpio Manalang, and Cpl. Raymundo Silvero. The others were Dr. Eduardo Quisumbing, Director Hilanion Silayan, Dr. Luis Alandy, Mrs. Sixto de la Costa, Mrs. Amparo A. Angara, Mr. and Mrs. Maximo Rodriguez, Dr. and Mrs. Francisco Vicuna, Mayor and Mrs. Pedro Alcantara, Mrs. Enriqueta Amador, Francisco Trinidad, Jose Alejandrino, Cesar Valenzuela, David Valenzuela, P. C. Guevara, and Mrs. Clara de Zubia.

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the home of Mrs. Consuelo Cuyugan in Baclaran, Rizal, about the massacre. Upon learning of the tragedy, Mrs. Cuyugan recalled that during Doña Aurora's visit to her home the previous Monday, Doña Aurora told her "to look after Nonong who is not so strong." She wondered if Doña Aurora had any premonition that something fatal would happen to her soon.

The massacre which was also communicated to President of the Philippines Elpidio Quirino in Baguio, came as a shock and for a moment it rendered him speechless. Upon regaining composure, the Chief Executive then recalled his offer of the presidential plane to Doña Aurora for the trip. "Had she accepted my offer, she would have been saved from the tragedy," he reminisced. The President then decided that the Philippine Government take charge of the funeral of Doña Aurora and forthwith ordered a 15-man committee, headed by former Speaker Jose Yulo, to make the necessary arrangements. At the same time, in a proclamation he issued, he ordered all public buildings to display the national flag at half-mast for nine days, beginning on April 29, in token of the "loving remembrance of the late Mrs. Aurora Aragon Quezon and as an expression of bereavement of our people for the untimely and immeasurable loss."

Doña Aurora was also dissuaded by a friend from making the trip to Baler because of the unsettled peace and order conditions in that section of the country. But she had complete and absolute trust and faith in her people, so that, to that well-meaning friend, she answered as she pointed to her white hair: "Luis Taruc knows my white hair and he will not hurt me."

The bodies of the Quezons arrived in Manila late in the night of that ill-fated Thursday, accompanied by Jalandoni. Upon instructions of the living children, the remains were

Mrs. Cuyugan plays second mother to the Quezon children who fondly call her *Nonong*.

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immediately sealed in bronze caskets, so the eager but sorrowing public was not allowed a view of them. Then, as the remains were brought to the Santo Rosario chapel of the University of Santo Tomas a large crowd of people from all walks of life not only followed but kept vigil day and night until the hour of interment on Friday afternoon.

Was Doña Aurora really the target of the ambushers? From the sworn testimony of a certain Domingo Lawag, foreman of the Bureau of Public Works assigned to the Boñgabon-Baler road construction project, who was one of some 70 persons held captive at the time, the dissidents were after certain "government officials expected to join Mrs. Quezon's party" whom they "blamed" for the alleged "extravagance and corruption in the government."

The Quezon assassination was rated the second most important news event in the Philippines that happened in 1949 by the *Evening News*, leading afternoon daily newspaper of Manila; and on the basis of the publicity accorded Philippine events in the United States during the same year, it was considered the third most important, surpassed only by the election to the presidency of the Philippine Republic of Elpidio Quirino and his whirlwind visit to the United States.

* * * * *

THE ATROCIOUS crime on the Quezon party brought tears to the people in the Philippines and foreign countries who had heard of it. There was profound mourning everywhere. There was universal lament over the death of Doña Aurora which was unanimously held to be "a great loss to the country, considering the fact that she had been active in charitable, civic and religious activities" and that the woman herself possessed sterling qualities worthy of emulation and adoration by the women of the Philippines. In Lucena, Quezon province, a day was set aside by the

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Provincial Board as a day of prayer for the repose of the soul of Doña Aurora.

To President of the Philippines Elpidio Quirino the death of Doña Aurora was "an irreparable loss to her family and to the Filipino people to whose welfare she dedicated her life fully with utmost zeal and devotion. * * I know the whole country mourns Mrs. Quezon's death. She was a mother to her people. The whole country is enraged by the incident," he remarked.

Speaker Eugenio Perez of the House of Representatives said that "our womanhood has lost a leader and a champion. We will always remember her works, charitable, civic, and religious. We feel a void in our midst in the untimely demise of the great and beloved Filipina leader."

When the news of the tragedy was broken to Sergio Osmeña, retired President of the Philippines, in Cebu City, he was stunned and became speechless for sometime. He was one of the many individuals who must have been visibly affected by the event because of his close personal relations with the Quezons. He said that "no words are strong enough to condemn such a horrible crime." Mrs. Esperanza Limjap Osmeña, his wife, was equally shocked and so grief-stricken was she that she shed tears upon being informed of the tragedy.

In Baguio, the Quezon massacre spelled gloom and sadness all over the Pines City of the Philippines where Doña Aurora had been a prominent resident because of her regular commutation between Manila and that northern mountain resort in her life time. The Most Reverend Michael J. O'Doherty, archbishop of Manila, was vacationing in Baguio then. During his long residence in the Philippines he became an intimate friend and spiritual adviser of the Quezons. He was stricken with grief upon learning of Doña Aurora's death. He remarked that "Mrs. Quezon had established a wonderful record as a diplomat, as a First Lady, as the consort of the late President Quezon.

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She has always been a national asset in holding the respect not only of Filipinos, but also of other people who came to know her."

Former Senate President Jose Avelino considered Doña Aurora a great Filipina in her own right. "The lifelong inspiration and most trusted counsellor of her immortal husband, with whom she shared struggle, victory, and exile, she could rightly be called the Mother of the People and our Republic," he asserted.

Ambassador Carlos P. Romulo, chief of the Philippine Mission to the United Nations, recalled that Doña Aurora was "liked by everyone and had no enemies. She was the First Lady of the Philippines—even after the death of her husband. Her work in the Philippine Red Cross was something that will live forever. She was a lady of such dignity."

Dr. Jose P. Laurel, president of the wartime Republic of the Philippines (1943-1944), joined his countrymen in mourning over this national catastrophe, and of Doña Aurora and her daughter, he paid this tribute: "It is inconceivable that the wife and the beloved child of the late President Quezon should die precisely in the hands of the people for whose rights the late President had fought so hard. * * * Doña Aurora and her daughter had been performing heroic work of faith, hope, and love for the masses in the noble tradition of our late President Quezon. Like him they, too, have given their lives in the course of a thankless struggle for the betterment of our people. Only Divine Providence can ever adequately explain to a sorrowing nation the infinite wisdom behind such supreme sacrifice suddenly exacted from heroes who had already given too much to a grateful people." Nay, all Filipinos, high and poor alike, those who knew her personally and those who knew her only by her name and deeds, shed tears, not once but whenever the atrocious event was mentioned.

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The news of the tragedy which was received with shock and sorrow had evoked universal condemnation against the persons responsible for the atrocity, according to reports sent to the Department of Foreign Affairs from its diplomatic and consular offices abroad. This world reaction was explained by Undersecretary Felino Neri of Foreign Affairs in this wise: "Foremost among the deeds for which our people shall long remember Mrs. Aurora Aragon Quezon is the indefatigable zeal and utter unselfishness with which she has pursued the work begun by her illustrious husband in ameliorating the condition of our masses and maintaining unsullied our national prestige abroad. The goodwill and friendship that the Philippines enjoys with the nations of the world today is in a measure due to the foundations laid down by the late President Quezon specially during the war years."

On his part, Ambassador Joaquin M. Elizalde, of the Philippine Embassy in Washington, D. C., said in his statement: "Doña Aurora was one of the best loved women of our country. Not only as the wife of our late President Quezon but because also of her own gracious qualities, she held a unique position in the eyes of the Filipino people. For several decades her influence and assistance were important factors in her husband's political career. In these later years she had devoted her efforts towards helping others."

Governor Mariano Peñaflorida, of Iloilo, urged the wiping out of the criminals who massacred Doña Aurora whom she called "the symbol of virtue and decency, who was revered and loved by all Filipinos."

In life Doña Aurora was "the most lovable person in the Philippines," said a taxi driver of Manila in commenting on her death, while to one housewife "she was the kindest woman I've ever met."

Demonstrative of the love and reverence the people hold for Doña Aurora were the suggestions made at the

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moment. A certain Silvestre B. Asis, of Manila, who considered "Mrs. Quezon's death a glorious one," suggested that she "should be listed as one of our greatest heroines;" while Quintin de la Torre, of Talisay, Cebu, urged that every Filipino should plant the ornamental plant, *Doña Aurora* (*Musaenda philippica* var. *aurorae*), to "symbolize devotion to duty."

Messages of condolence from foreign countries continued pouring in Malacañan and at the home of the Quezons for days after the tragedy. There was a message of sympathy from His Holiness Pope Pius XII. President Harry S. Truman of the United States of America led his people in voicing their sympathy for the death of Doña Aurora.

From Tokyo, Japan, General of the Army and Mrs. Douglas MacArthur extended their deepest sympathy to the surviving members of the Quezon family. "There will be universal horror and regret throughout the world for this profound tragedy to a family whose greatness is infinitely stamped on its country's history," said his message to Manuel Quezon, Jr.

Deep regret at the slaying of Doña Aurora by the dissidents was expressed by Associate Justice Frank Murphy of the United States Supreme Court upon being apprised of the event. Of her, Murphy said: "As the beloved wife of the former President, Mrs. Quezon was respected and revered throughout the Islands and by many friends in this country. The wholesome influence of her fine character and wise counsel was widely felt both inside and outside government circles. The Philippine people have lost a great cherished friend."

To Rear Admiral H. H. Good, of the United States Navy, Doña Aurora was an inestimable loss to the Republic of the Philippines. "Her martyred death will be a symbol of the democratic forces which are trying to destroy that way of life," he said. "We in the United States

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know full well of her stand for democracy and that her work for your first President will be carried in the annals of both our countries as one of the outstanding examples of teamwork in showing how democracy can be carried forward."

Another tribute came from J. Weldon Jones, former acting high commissioner of the United States to the Philippines, who pointed out that Doña Aurora "was a quiet but outstanding supporter of her illustrious husband;" while Congressman Charles Halleck, House Republican floor leader in the United States Congress, called the late President and Doña Aurora "magnificent people."

Colin W. Waddell, noted Australian scholar, who used to lecture on life in the Philippines, wrote that in Doña Aurora the Filipino people look to her dignity and grace "with much the same warm affection that we show towards our Queen Mother in England."

Some foreign governments also joined the Philippines in this hour of affliction. Through its minister in the Philippines, the chief of the Spanish state transmitted his "expression of the sincerest condolence."

"The government and the people of Australia learned with deep horror the murder of Doña Aurora," read the message sent to the Department of Foreign Affairs. "The death of one who has played such a part in the development of the Philippine Republic and who was so intimately connected for many years with its most historic movement is a bereavement which will be felt by every Filipino," it stated.

Heads of various national organizations commented on the tragedy. In the opinion of Dr. Manuel Lim, who succeeded Doña Aurora as chairman of the board of governors of the Philippine National Red Cross, her death was "a national disaster, not only for the Red Cross, but for the entire Filipino nation as well." He added, "Mrs.

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Quezon leaves behind a heritage rich in sublimity and of unequalled worth. Her unselfish devotion to humanity at large, and her people in particular will live in the hearts of all men long after she is gone."

"The women of the Philippines lost a leader, a great sympathizer and a staunch sponsor of social justice for all," in the estimation of Miss Julita V. Sotejo, president of the Filipino Nurses Association.

Upon the recommendation of the American Association of the Philippines, the American community in the Philippines observed a month of mourning for Doña Aurora whose place in the Philippines was likened to "that of Martha Washington in the early days of the American Republic." Frederic H. Stevens, then president of the American Chamber of Commerce, in lamenting the ambush, said "it is an appalling thing to have to write down in the annals of the nation. Americans here feel this deeply and wish they could aid or comfort."

Women's clubs in different countries which are affiliated to the National Federation of Women's Clubs of the Philippines did not lose time cabling messages of condolence to the Quezon family. Tokens of bereavement were received from the Philippine-American Women's Club of Washington, D.C., the Filipino Women's Club of San Diego, California, and the Filipino-Hawaii Women's Club of Honolulu. On its part, the Filipino Community of Honolulu, in the territory of Hawaii, sent three wreaths of rare Hawaiian orchids to Manila in loving remembrance of Doña Aurora.

The Joint Committee on United States-Philippines Relations, of which Dr. Adam C. Derkum¹ is the permanent chairman, upon motion of Roy C. Bennett, unanimously approved a resolution expressing to the surviving mem-

¹One-time division superintendent of schools in Tariac and Panganga.

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bers of the Quezon family their "sincere and deep sympathy and condolence in their great irreplaceable loss." The resolution said, in part, that "Mrs. Quezon, both in her public and private life, was exemplary in character, a civic leader, a great humanitarian, a devout and faithful Christian" and that "we who knew Mrs. Quezon personally, admired her fine qualities of leadership, her devotion to her people, and the absorbing interest in the welfare of her country." Represented in this Joint Committee were the Philippine Society of Southern California, the Pan-Pacific Association for Mutual Understanding, the Sponsors of the Philippine Heroes, and the Bataan-Corregidor Memorial Committee.

The Fourth Estate throughout the world gave the Quezon massacre its due importance and significance as can be gleaned from the different newspaper accounts received in the Philippines. While the dastardly crime was unanimously condemned, the profound sympathy of the people of all climes was conveyed.

In the United States the tragedy was made the day's biggest story in the *New York Sun*, while the *New York World Telegram* carried a six-column banner over the UP story which was accompanied by the portraits of Doña Aurora and her daughter. Both the *New York Post* and the *Journal American* headlined the story as second in importance only to the talks on the Berlin blockade.

Consul Sofronio Abrera of the Philippine Consulate in Los Angeles, California, reported that all the Los Angeles newspapers carried the news of the massacre in banner headlines. Well known in that American city were the Quezons who spent part of their "exile" in the United States for the duration of World War II in the West Coast.

After expressing its deep sympathy for the Filipino people in this grievous loss, the *New York Times* said that the "Philippines has lost in Mrs. Quezon a gracious lady

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who was widely beloved and honored for her leadership in many good causes."

The tragedy was described by the *New York Herald Tribune* in its editorial as "so wanton and pointless, whatever the motives of the killers." In paying tribute to Doña Aurora, the editor said that "the great crowd of mourners which gathered for her funeral procession was an eloquent testimony to her position in the hearts of her people," and concluded that "the United States will share in the sorrow of the Philippines, and hope that the young Republic will soon be able to stamp out the forces which threaten it."

The *Chicago Daily News*, in its issue of April 28, 1949, front-paged the story, with an eight-column headline reading thus, REDS KILL QUEZON'S WIDOW. This typified the manner editors of the metropolitan press in the United States reacted to the shocking news of her death. So significant and newsworthy was the Quezon story that it shoved down practically all other news of the day, including an interview given by President Harry S. Truman on the Taft-Hartley labor law.

In its editorial of April 29, the *Bristol Press* of Connecticut wrote that the daring assault on Doña Aurora "demonstrates the fearlessness of the Huks... Mrs. Quezon was the First Lady of the Philippines and was very popular with the people. The assailants must have known that her death would cause an angry outburst and demand for retaliation."

On the other hand, the Hamilton (O.) *Journal-News* editorial of April 30 expressed the hope that "the cold blooded massacre which took place while Mrs. Quezon was on the way to dedicate a plaque honoring her husband, should arouse the Philippine government to take decisive action against the communist-led bandits who have infested Central Luzon since the Japanese defeat." The same newspaper paid tribute to Doña Aurora saying that she

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"was probably the best loved and most highly respected citizen of the new Republic. She was admired as much for her own contribution to Philippine independence and the welfare of the Filipinos as for the memory of her revered husband."

All Europe was shocked by the violent death of Doña Aurora. Not to be outdone by their American contemporaries, European newspapers published a full account of the tragedy on their front pages immediately upon receiving the overseas dispatches from press service associations and their own correspondents in the Philippines.

From Buenos Aires, Argentina, in South America, came the report of Minister Narciso Ramos of the Philippine Legation, saying that the death was played up by the afternoon newspapers with lengthy AP and UP ambush accounts. "The death of so good and virtuous a woman who had consecrated her life to the welfare of her people is a national loss," he added.

In Madrid, Spain, Charge d'Affaires Manuel Nieto of the Philippine Legation cabled the Department of Foreign Affairs to the effect that all Spanish newspapers front-paged the massacre with a picture of Doña Aurora.

In the Philippines the Quezon murder was given great prominence in the newspapers for days. It was the biggest story for weeks. Editors and columnists alike wrote extensively and commented exhaustively on it.

To Mrs. Virginia Benitez Licuanan, *Manila Chronicle* columnist, the tragic death of Doña Aurora was a shock to all "not only because of its suddenness, but because it was too violent an end for so gentle a person. The contrast between the cruel ruthlessness of her assailants and the serenity and humanity of her spirit is what makes the attack seem as outrageous and blasphemous as the desecration of a holy shrine," she pointed out.

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Ernesto del Rosario, of the "Off the Beat" column, also of the *Manila Chronicle*, wrote that wherever the guilt for the murder of Doña Aurora lies, "no hands have ever dripped with more innocent or nobler blood. The outraged people will not listen to any reason for this most heinous of all crimes. It is a crime that strikes at the hearts of each and everyone of us. * * * Mrs. Quezon, those who died with her and those who died before them are martyrs to the cause of peace and order."

Vicente Villamin, *Manila Daily Bulletin* columnist, writing from Washington, D.C., termed the murderous incident "an attack against both the people and the government." He urged both entities to "close ranks to repel further attacks." He said that "every erring soul must be overwhelmingly convinced that every act of lawlessness and bestiality will be discovered and dealt with relentlessly."

Of Doña Aurora, Villamin remarked that her "fate should serve as a unifying force among the good people of the Philippines, irrespective of personal political differences and party affiliations. It should also serve to sear the soul of those few who believe in violence and covet the things that belong to others without earning them." He added that "if every act of service and humanity that she (Doña Aurora) rendered to others in her lifetime is represented by a beautiful rose, there will certainly be a mountain of beautiful roses symbolizing her public life."

The *Philippines Free Press*, American-owned independent weekly, pointed out in its editorial that the murder of Doña Aurora was one act committed by the dissidents that had "aroused so much anger all over the Philippines." In justifying its assertion, the editor emphasized on the preparations made for the ambush. "The attack was sudden and treacherous. Deliberation was evident in the gun emplacements that had been prepared days in advance at the point of the ambushade. Men were held captive, to

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make more deadly certain the success of the well-laid plan. For weeks in advance, it was generally known in the surrounding area that on that day Mrs. Quezon and party would pass along that road to Baler to honor the memory of her husband," it said.

The same weekly had also a full-page illustrated editorial on the event. In it the editor remarked that "the death of Doña Aurora came not only as a shock to Filipinos but almost as an assault on their person. The widow of so great a man, so great a lady in her own right, dedicating her days to the service of the needy, revered by all—now brutally murdered, butchered. . . . by men turned savages. . . ."

The *Manila Times* editorial, on the other hand, opined that "the brute, insensate murder. . . .brought to her (Doña Aurora) a martyrdom that will forever enshrine her memory in the hearts of the people whose love she gained."



8.

The Most Revered Woman

GRIEF-BOWED THRONG MOURNS LOSS." This was the eight-column streamer of the *Manila Times*, largest morning daily newspaper of the Philippines, on April 30, 1949, the day after the mortal remains of Doña Aurora Aragon Quezon and the two other members of her family had been laid to their final resting place. How aptly typified was the general feeling and sentiment of the people of the country on her funeral day by the headline!

Unmindful of the overcast sky that afternoon, a sorrowing throng conservatively estimated at 300,000 people from all walks of life lined the long funeral route from the University of Santo Tomas chapel to the North Cemetery and bowed their heads in grief to pay her their last tribute as the hearse bearing the body of Doña Aurora rolled past them.

Although the funeral ceremony was scheduled at four o'clock in the afternoon, yet long before that hour the mourners and the general public had started gathering at the chapel. By the time the religious rites had begun, the chapel became so crowded that guards of honor were posted by the different organizations to which Doña Aurora and her daughter, Maria Aurora (Baby), had belonged, like the Philippine National Red Cross, the Girl Scouts of the Philippines, the National Federation of Women's Clubs, and the Young Ladies Association of Charity (YLA').

At the chapel a small group of distinguished women and selected Red Cross workers stood guard at the casket containing the body of Doña Aurora. It was draped with

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the flag of the Philippines, "symbolic of the nation's acknowledgment of her greatness." The thick lei of fresh sampaguita and ilang-ilang blossoms, placed by her family on top of the casket, reminded the persons closed to her of the flowers that she was fond of wearing in her life time.

After the 25-minute religious ceremony in the chapel, the casket was moved from the altar to the chapel door with President of the Philippines Elpidio Quirino acting as one of the principal pallbearers.¹

As the casket was lifted into a motorized unit outside the chapel, the Philippine Army band played *Nearer My God To Thee*. The pallbearers accompanied the casket to the university campus gate where the procession was formed. The solemn funeral cortege which inched slowly passed P. Noval, P. Campa, España, Quezon Boulevard, Rizal Avenue, and Blumentritt, and then proceeded to the North Cemetery.

At the head of the cortege were the Philippine flag and a motorcycle escort; then followed closely the three funeral coaches loaded with floral tributes, a contingent of uniformed Manila policemen, a detail of the city firemen, and the Philippine Army band led by Major Laureano Cariño.

The leading car was a black Packard limousine in which rode President Quirino with his daughter, Miss Victoria (Vicky) Quirino, and his senior aide. Trailing behind were car No. 12-J which was occupied by the Quezon family, the car of acting Senate President Cuenco, and that of Speaker Perez which had the widow of the President of the Philippines Manuel Roxas in it.

Near the corner of Rizal Avenue and Bambang street, the hearse bearing the casket of Doña Aurora broke down,

¹The other pallbearers were acting Senate President Mariano J. Cuenco, Speaker Eugenio Perez, Chief Justice Manuel V. Moran, and Mrs. Francisca T. Bordez, president of the Philippine Women's University.

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so that the hearse bearing the casket of her daughter had to push it all the way to the cemetery. From the Filipino veterans' mausoleum in the cemetery, members of the Quezon family relieved the honorary pallbearers up to the Quezon burial ground.

While the crowd at the University of Santo Tomas chapel filled every available space and others hung through the windows to witness the ceremonies, the bigger number of people at the cemetery perched atop neighboring mausoleums, boys clung to the huge and standing crosses of nearby tombs while women pressed against the wrought-iron railings enclosing the Quezon family lot to view the mortal remains of Doña Aurora for the last time.

As the cortege was nearing the Quezon lot, the mournful crowd was startled by the sudden flash of two successive lightnings that had forked against the sunset, followed by rolls of thunder, which heavenly phenomenon set the people "to thinking dark forboding thoughts."

At six p. m., the casket of Doña Aurora arrived at the burial site preceded by mournful dirges. As the last notes of Chopin's *Funeral March* died away, the Most Reverend Rufino Santos, auxiliary bishop of Manila, prepared to conduct the last religious rites for the adored dead.

There was complete silence as the bishop took his place at the head of Doña Aurora's bier, and then opened his missal. The brief rites lasting two minutes ended as he reached for the font and blessed the departed lady. All this time the people bowed their heads in reverence and sorrow.

Then the flag-draped casket of Doña Aurora was carried to its permanent resting place inside the lot by Speaker Eugenio Perez, acting Senate President Mariano Jesus Cuenco, former Speaker Jose Yulo, Dr. Manuel Lim, cabinet secretaries, and congressmen. The flag removed, the bronze casket was slipped into the new concrete crypt a few yards



People gathered at the front of the University of Santo Domingo at the time of a mass demonstration in the courtyard of the building on April 29, 1969.

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to the left side of the marble tomb of her illustrious husband. Then President Quirino, with face frozen with grief, laid a sprig of flowers on the tomb and later knelt down for a moment as he said a prayer together with his daughter.

On the tomb of Doña Aurora were laid the mass of floral offerings consisting of beautiful wreaths and sprays, among them the Philippine Anti-Tuberculosis Society's emblem fashioned of red roses and the one wreath which bore the inscription, "To Mrs. Quezon, the most revered woman in the Philippines." After the ceremonies, admirers of Doña Aurora gathered keepsakes from the family lot.

As Doña Aurora was buried on that Friday afternoon, the Philippine official tri-color flew at half-mast at all public buildings and government offices throughout the country "in memory of the great and noble lady."

* * * * *

SHORTLY AFTER the Manila periodicals had published brief accounts of the tragic demise of Doña Aurora and the Manila radio stations had broadcast the event late that fateful Thursday of April 28, 1949, friends and admirers of Doña Aurora began to make arrangements for the holding of appropriate necrological services in her honor and religious rites for the eternal repose of her soul.

From Baguio the following morning, President of the Philippines Elpidio Quirino took an airplane to be in Manila on time for the high requiem mass said for Doña Aurora at the chapel of the University of Santo Tomas where the mortal remains was laid in state. Other masses were also said in the same chapel from six o'clock to nine o'clock in the morning.

Gregorian masses for Doña Aurora were likewise offered at 6:30 o'clock every morning by the Centro Escolar

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University at the San Beda church, while the daily evening rosaries for her were conducted by University President Carmen de Luna.

Among the many high requiem masses for Doña Aurora were those offered by the Asociación de Damas Filipinas at the Settlement House in Paco; by the National Federation of Women's Clubs at the Pro-Cathedral in San Miguel, officiated by the Most Reverend Rufino J. Santos, D.D., auxiliary bishop of Manila; by Sir Gabriel La O, president of the Papal Knights Association, and Sir Paulino M. Sampede, delegate of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta, at the chapel of the Archbishop's Palace at Villa San Miguel in Mandaluyon; by the Philippine National Red Cross at the Pro-Cathedral in San Miguel; by the board of directors of the De La Salle Alumni Association at the college chapel.

A high requiem mass under the auspices of the National Campaign Organization for the Antipolo Church Reconstruction, of which Doña Aurora was the chairman of the board of directors, was said at the Church of St. Therese of the Child of Jesus in the Carmelite Monastery in Quezon City; another was offered under the sponsorship of the Manuel L. Quezon Educational Institution at the Pro-Cathedral in San Miguel; and still another was said at the instance of the May Devotions Laymen's Committee at the Malate Catholic church.

The White Cross, Inc., likewise offered a high requiem mass for Doña Aurora at its chapel in San Juan; another was said at the Pasig Catholic church under the sponsorship of the national, provincial and municipal officials and employees and prominent citizens and leaders of Rizal led by their governor; and another one yet was that sponsored by the Nueva Ecija Red Cross chapter held at the Cabanatuan parish church.

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In Lipa City (Batangas) where she had sponsored the building of the church to Our Lady Mediatrix, Auxiliary Bishop F. Domingo Lebreca dedicated a high requiem mass after nine days' community prayer.

For living and dying "as a pillar of the Catholic Church and a model for all Filipino laity," the Laymen's Committee on the Marian Movement requested all parish priests in the Philippines to say a requiem mass in their respective parishes on Saturday, May 28, 1949, for the repose of the soul of Doña Aurora. The committee also asked "the faithful to participate in this manifestation of love and gratitude to this wonderful woman who worked so faithfully for our Lady."

In foreign lands religious ceremonies were also held in memory of Doña Aurora. Brigadier General Carlos P. Romulo, chief of the Philippine mission to the United Nations, and his wife, Mrs. Virginia L. Romulo, had a high requiem mass celebrated at the St. Matthews Cathedral in Washington, D. C., officiated by Monsignor Richard Cartwright.

Another high requiem mass was said at the St. Matthews Cathedral also for Doña Aurora at the initiative of the Philippine Embassy at Washington, D. C. The service was presided over by Archbishop Patrick A. O'Boyle of Washington. Reverend Pacifico Ortiz, who was the chaplain assigned to President Quezon in Corregidor and the United States during the World War II, delivered the eulogy.

Father Ortiz described Dona Aurora as a person who "walked through life doing good, who was light unto the blind, protecting unto the weak, the mother of the poor, and in a sense, the mother of us all. . . . If there ever was a person who to this our generation incarnated charity, love, kindness, it was she—the sweet, compassionate lady whose memory binds us in prayer today."

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In elaborating further, he said: "This was her role in the history of our country; this was the part she played since the birth of our nation: Like a mother, to keep us together; to heal broken friendships, to bind up political wounds, to pour the oil of compassion upon the social ulcers of our age, to cherish and guard the sanctities of the home. Behind the man we all admired, stood the lady of charity."

At Saint Vivian's Cathedral, hundreds of Filipino and American devout Catholics who knew Doña Aurora in life prayed and heard Father Francis Hoza sing the high requiem mass and deliver a sermon extolling her Catholic life and activities. In Hongkong, Monsignor Henry Valtorta, bishop of this British colony, officiated at a high requiem mass for Doña Aurora. Another mass was said at the Hongkong Catholic Cathedral by Rev. Eleuterio Hernandez, superior of the Dominicans there, at the instance of the Philippine Consulate.

In San Francisco, California, the Filipino community joined together in a special requiem mass for Doña Aurora in which Archbishop J. J. Mitty of San Francisco officiated. In New York City, a high requiem mass was said for the same noble purpose at St. Patrick's Cathedral. It was arranged by the Philippine consulate on behalf of the Filipino residents. The Philippine delegation at Buenos Aires, Argentina, also held a high requiem mass officiated by Cardinal Primate Luis Copello.

A series of Gregorian masses was likewise held at the Vatican City in Rome, Italy, for the eternal repose of the soul of Doña Aurora. The masses were offered by the National Campaign Committee for the Reconstruction of the Church for the Virgen de la Paz y Buen Viaje de Antipolo. Filipino pilgrims who attended the golden jubilee of Pope Pius XII had a mass celebrated at the altar of the Pieta Chapel in honor of Doña Aurora on June 19, 1949.

Aside from the masses, necrological services were also held in memory of Doña Aurora. The Philippine National

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Red Cross, of which she was the chairman of the board of governors up to her death, broadcast a simple necrological program over Station DZRH one evening, while the Institute of National Language dedicated its regular weekly radio program over Station DZFM to her memory during which Dr. Francisco Santiago's song, entitled *Doña Aurora*, was featured. In the cities of Cebu and Zamboanga in the Visayan islands, solemn necrological services were held with speakers representing the cosmopolitan population extolling the life and labors of Doña Aurora.

Tribute was paid to the memory of Doña Aurora by the Congress of the Philippines when both Houses devoted their respective sessions during which the speakers wept unashamedly. On the part of the Senate, a resolution of condolence on the death of Doña Aurora was unanimously passed shortly before it declared a recess for a period of three days ending on May 3 (1949) as "a token of respect."

In eulogizing Doña Aurora, Senator Geronima T. Pecson who spoke in "slow, measured accents often accompanied with tears," said that her "passing was a national disaster of the first order." The woman senator then added: "She was the personification of all the qualities and virtues that our people love in a woman. She was outstanding as the inspiration and helpmate of the beloved leader who dedicated his whole life passionately in the preparation of a people for an independent Republic."

Acting Senate President Cuenco remarked that "in Doña Aurora's death, one of the greatest Filipino women who ever lived, beloved of her people for her unselfish and untiring devotion to the public good, the nation has suffered a truly irreparable loss. A loyal nation will revere and honor her memory."

As one of the speakers at the necrological services in honor of Doña Aurora given under the auspices of the Philippine National Red Cross at the Malacañan Palace,

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Mrs. Trinidad F. Legarda, president of the National Federation of Women's Clubs, pointed to Doña Aurora's death as truly a national loss. "If those of us today revere her, the future generations of Filipinos will exalt her as one of the greatest benefactors of our people in her own right, for her noble life and loving deeds will forever be a stimulating source for inspiration and emulation," she said. "We, her unworthy successors, can build no better memorial than to continue the work that she has started and to try to follow her worthy example."

In the same services, President of the Philippines Elpidio Quirino, after dwelling extensively on the career of Doña Aurora as a devoted and inspired wife, a virtuous and glorious mother, and an illustrious patriot, concluded thus:

"The world has shared our people's sorrow in a tragic passing. Those of us who know her well can most truly say: to know her was to respect her, to admire her, to love her. No longer shall she grace the halls of the land which were wont to be exalted by her ennobling personality; no longer shall welfare institutions feel the touch of her kind heart and hand. No longer shall these Palace halls be dignified by her handsome and queenly figure; no longer shall these walls receive the impact of her gentle influence. No longer shall this atmosphere, which for many years she had enlivened with her wisdom and charm, be permeated by her spirit of racial honor and pride—as embodiment of the noblest type of Filipino womanhood.

"Everyone of us feels the poorer because of her death. All of our people and our posterity will be the richer because she has lived."



BOOK II

1.

The Virtuous Filipina

"....A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband, a prudent wife is from the Lord.—She stretches forth her hands to the needy. Favour is deceitful and beauty is vain: a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised.—Her husband is honorable in the gates when he sitteth among the senators of the land."

VERY WELL, indeed, does this quotation bespeak of Doña Aurora, the virtuous lady, the exemplary representative of the new type of Filipino womanhood, whose "quiet and unobtrusive and ever self-effacing influence and example" had brought bountiful blessings to her people in her lifetime.

Her lofty character and ideals were an inspiration to her fellow-women; her democratic and simple ways were the admiration of her countrymen, both rich and poor; while her charm, her sympathy, and her personality had gained for her the respect of all, Filipinos and foreigners alike, in the Philippines and abroad.

In her nothing was complex; she remained incredibly humble and unaffected throughout her years although she had both power and influence. The following little stories will amply show the great interest Doña Aurora had for the little people.

It was late in the afternoon of a certain day when Doña Aurora had just gone through a hard and exhausting

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grind, so she decided to have a rest in her room in the second floor of her house. She ordered her maid that she be not disturbed. But soon came for a conference with her an influential politician who was also a high ranking government official. Seeing that he was an important individual, the maid went up to Doña Aurora, despite previous orders, to tell her of the caller. Politely Doña Aurora refused to see him and he was asked to return much later.

A few minutes after, four farmers came barefooted and knocked at the back door. They wanted to see Doña Aurora to whom they had to confide a serious problem which she alone could help settle. But this time the maid was unmoved by their pleas and forthwith dismissed them. As they turned their backs to leave, Doña Aurora called for them. Forgetting her weariness in the meantime, she listened interestedly to their talks, and then pledged her cooperation. After expressing their gratitude to her, the group left satisfied that they had accomplished their mission.

Then there was that sixty-two-year-old woman who, dressed in simple cotton and wearing a pair of worn-out shoes, walked in one day to the Philippine National Red Cross office and wrote her name on a slip of paper which she sent in to Doña Aurora. Although the latter was busy presiding over an important meeting of the society in which the next fund-raising campaign was being mapped out, Doña Aurora excused herself from the conference and met the woman, who turned out to be a former classmate at the Philippine Normal School.

A very outstanding characteristic of Doña Aurora was her willingness to help everybody, be they strangers or acquaintances. At one time, on her way to Baguio, her car was unexpectedly stopped near San Fernando, the cap-

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ital of Pampanga. The driver was being mobbed by an angry crowd as the motor victim lay unconscious on the concrete road. Soon after Doña Aurora had the situation well in hand, for she took the patient to the provincial hospital for medical treatment. "I am Mrs. Quezon," she told the mob before she departed. When she arrived in Baguio, she telephoned the hospital and inquired after the victim's condition. In due time the man got well and returned to his home hale and healthy.

Again, when a prominent scientist needed medical treatment for the cure of his cancer in the throat, Doña Aurora, upon learning that the patient could not afford to make the trip, without knowing him personally, brought the matter to the attention of her husband-President who, in turn, appointed the government scientist as Philippine delegate to a conference that was held abroad. In this way he was able to secure the necessary medical aid to alleviate his affliction.

Doña Aurora was one woman who never spoke ill of other persons. She also hated gossip. Even society matrons were careful in their conversation with her, especially when the talk went a little gossipy. A stickler to the Spanish proverb, "What you hear in one house, never repeat in other houses," she had taught the Quezon children the value of this popular adage which had withstood them in good stead, either in private or in public, for they have never been rude in their speech.

This gracious and refined lady possessed a fine voice which was never known to have risen in anger. That voice had "a soft, musical quality about it. And character. When used in singing her restless grandson to sleep, it was soothingly tender; when addressing a massed audience it instinctively commanded attention and drew respect; and when telling a creepy ghost story—a pastime Mrs. Quezon was partial to of a moonless, windy night—it took

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on a vividness that sent her young listeners cowering under blankets."

Her advice, be it to her children at home or to her companions, always carried weight. Not infrequently had she been responsible in bringing back to the Quezon political bandwagon many a disgruntled politician. Doña Aurora through her charming personality and convincing persuasion, had in many cases won over from the opposing political factions many valuable adherents to the dynamic and strong leadership of President Quezon.

To Doña Aurora morality had an all-embracing scope. It did not mean only the sexual phase of the thing as many people have mistakenly interpreted it. To her morality had a vast wider province because she put a premium on the morality of a person. She thought that morality must necessarily include dealings and behavior with friends and fellowmen. That was the reason why she had brought happiness to many a couple in their marital life. It was during her frequent trips to Baguio (which, because of its very small area, has become the most gossipy town in the Philippines) that she got wind of the doings of people around her from her friends who used to bring her the gossip which she termed "mis-mis" (an expression she coined to stand for *chismis* or gossip).

In her hometown in Baler, Doña Aurora had the Redemptorist fathers hold religious missions now and then, each mission lasting nine days during which time she had people married and children baptized and confirmed with her acting as the godmother in most cases.

Of her friends Doña Aurora demanded both faithfulness and loyalty. She was particular about a friend's word or promise to her. To her one's word was a vital thing, and if it was not complied with she got disappointed. But Doña Aurora never showed that she was mad

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with anybody, for she never revealed it or expressed it to anyone, never spoke of her anger, she never raised her voice to anybody, even to her servants. However, when anyone of her friends discovered that Doña Aurora had failed to invite her to a party at the Quezon home, when in previous occasions that friend had always been one of those called to grace such an occasion, then would that particular friend discover for herself that she had incurred somehow the displeasure of Doña Aurora.

So the next thing for her to do was to inquire from other friends of Doña Aurora to find if she had incidentally spoken of her anger. On the other hand, when friends asked Doña Aurora why someone had not been around for sometime, she usually gave a pretext such as, "Oh, she might be busy with something important that she cannot dispense with just now," in order not to cause any embarrassment. "You will think you are living in paradise if you do not know that she is mad at you," remarked Dr. Eduardo Quisumbing, a close friend of the Quezons for many years. "She was very sweet and diplomatic. She possessed that rare characteristic seldom found in Filipino women: reservation. She would not insult you in the presence of anyone."

Social justice had been put into actual practice by Doña Aurora long before President Quezon enunciated his noble program along this line. During the administration of the last American governor general, Doña Aurora was informed that one tubercular Bilibid prisoner was on the verge of dying. The patient was not receiving the right medical treatment. To save him, Doña Aurora appealed to Governor General Frank Murphy, and soon after the prisoner-patient was transferred to the Santol Sanatorium. As he was penniless, she paid the hospital charges from her own money.

Also well known was Doña Aurora's generosity and patience. She had been so generous all her days that any

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civic movement made its initial appeal for financial aid to her to bolster the project. She had been liberal in the disposition of her money which she earned through her business deals—she had varied investments which proved successful—and her liberality had enabled many poor but deserving Filipino students to pursue and complete their professional studies.

Many a time her generosity and patience had been tried and tested. Just how generous and patient she was, was manifested during the fete President and Mrs. Quezon gave for the alumni, faculty, and students of the University of the Philippines on the occasion of the celebration of the thirtieth anniversary of its founding at the new Malacañan grounds on the south side of the Pasig river, when Doña Aurora's autograph was eagerly sought by thousands of collegians. Tags, pieces of paper, identification cards, pictures, etc., some dirty, others soiled, were presented for her signature, and for six hours, starting at 11 o'clock in the morning, she willingly obliged her guests. During that period Doña Aurora signed an average of about 45 autographs a minute, which meant a total of 2,700 an hour.

She also possessed the easy, half-humorous charm of the born after-dinner speaker, although she distrusted her own ability in public speaking.

This admirable trait of Doña Aurora had been exhibited many times. When 200 prominent Filipino and American women gathered at a banquet to honor her soon after her arrival from a trip to Europe, she gave the audience two new and rib-tickling after-dinner jokes. "There was an Italian who was asked to talk in English to an English group. To please them he spoke at length. At the close of his talk, he was congratulated. Then a guest stood up, and said, 'I wish I could speak Italian!' I hope that hasn't happened to me," she declared in justifying her



The lady in the light dress is the author's daughter.

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reason for speaking to them in English. "Since English is the universal language, I thought it best to use it instead of my own beloved Tagalog."

Then she continued. "A Japanese gentleman in the diplomatic circles in New York was seated beside an American friend of ours when the soup was served. 'Do you like the soupy?' questioned our friend. 'No, I do not like the soupy,' answered the Japanese. Then the Japanese was called to speak, and he spoke at length in perfect English. The American was embarrassed, but never so acutely as when his Japanese neighbor turned to him afterwards, and asked, 'Did you like my speaky?' So, if you do not understand me, ask your neighbor. I would hate to have someone congratulate me on my English after this luncheon."

Her popularity with the people is accounted for also by the fact that she spoke three languages—Spanish, English, and Tagalog—fluently. But she always preferred to talk in the native language which she did with "a charming trace of Tayabas accent." Because she had a good command of the English language, Doña Aurora was "surprisingly apt and witty to the point of the epigrammatic." Proof of this trait was her answer to the question of preferences in food. "I consider eating a total waste of time. If I could only take food in the form of pills, I would much prefer it," she replied pointedly.

She was very much against the present-day pañueloless terno which, to her, was a "complete assassination of the Filipino dress." She also frowned on certain unconventionalities to which many young girls get affected nowadays, principally smoking, drinking, and pseudo-sophistication.

Doña Aurora became a well-traveled woman. She had made trips to the United States, Europe, and the countries of the Orient. She had gained much from her travels,

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learned a great deal about other peoples, their customs and virtues, all of which she had appreciated and liked. She had a great admiration for American institutions, principally those in which the women participate actively in their affairs. The independence and the self-reliance of the American woman she greatly admired. Of the American woman, Doña Aurora had this impression: "I am a great admirer of the American woman. I think it can fairly be said that the education of the average American woman is above that of her sisters in other parts of the world. Because of her intellectual and physical training she is independent and self-reliant. She is, therefore, well fitted to do the woman's part in the upbuilding and improvement of the human race. I was so kindly treated by every American lady I met in the United States that I got the impression they are all nice and generous."

As a friend, Doña Aurora was regarded by all as a "fair-or-foul weather" friend because of her ever-readiness to help those whom she found in distress and those who sought her advice and help. Her homes in the prewar (World War II) days and those on Gilmore Avenue in Quezon City and in Baguio which she occupied from the liberation of the Philippines in 1945 up to her death were always swarmed with visitors—friends, colleagues of President Quezon, and former political enemies—who came to her even after the death of her husband.

Doña Aurora usually went out of her way to please her friends. She did a lot of activities outside her daily chores for them.¹ At one time she consented to throw the first ball at the inaugural ceremonies of the Quezon City Bowl-

¹While in the United States during World War II, Doña Aurora had a gall-bladder operation. Upon her return to the Philippines in mid-1946, she underwent a thorough and satisfactory health examination. Her physician found her "heart was better" and after five years of restriction she was allowed to have her morning coffee. "The doctor said that if I observed regulations, I could expect to live to a ripe, old age," she said with her face lighted up.

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ing Alley (on Highway 51 and Santa Mesa Extension). Once she had to oblige friends by personally distributing the award granted to Dr. Concepcion A. Aguila as the "most distinguished alumna" of the Centro Escolar University. Then there was the Philippine Women's University which held the celebration of its Do-Day to coincide with her birthday anniversary on February 19 because of Doña Aurora's close association with the university officials.

Dr. Eduardo Quisumbing treasures the ever-thoughtfulness of Doña Aurora for her house guests. "She saw to it that they ate well, slept well, and enjoyed their stay," he said. In that manner she was like her husband, the late President Quezon, who was known in his household as "the old man." Her thoughtfulness knew no bounds. In her out-of-town trips to Baler, Baguio, Lucena or Arayat, she had always plenty of food stocked up which she passed around to her companions during the brief stopovers on the way. Doña Aurora was ever solicitous about her visitors' convenience.

Although during her days as the First Lady of the Land (1935-1944) Doña Aurora did not have the so-called "kitchen cabinet" so prevalent during the post-liberation era, which is composed of close women friends and associates of the wife and family of the chief executive at the time, yet she was surrounded by a small but exclusive group of ladies who kept her company at home or in Malacañan, and who attended her small private gatherings which were "thoroughly enjoyable without desecrating the sanctity of the people's palace." On her part, in these parties she "could enter into festive gaiety....without appearing ludicrous, be lively without losing her stately poise." This delightful circle of women with whom Doña Aurora had struck life-long friendships included Mesdames Esperanza Limjap, wife of former President of the Philippines Sergio Osmeña; Alicia Syquia, the late wife of President of

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the Philippines Elpidio Quirino; and Marina Yulo, wife of former Chairman of the Philippine Executive Commission Jorge B. Vargas.

Doña Aurora enjoyed her few but chosen hobbies in life. She was very fond of collecting antiques, jewelry, and combs. She missed them a lot when the Japanese took possession of her Pasay home and looted her personal property. She had also a collection of gold coins which she kept in the bank. She had only a few genuine jewelry. This accounted for the fact that, as a woman, she was not showy but instead the personification of humility in the real sense of the word. She had a miniature Japanese-like garden pool for her tropical fishes over which she used to spend minutes feeding them. Her collection of rare old paintings was destroyed by the enemy during the occupation period of the Philippines from 1942 to 1945. Because she was a voracious reader she kept a good-size library of her own. Her room in the Gilmore Avenue home was littered with religious classics. She was still reading *Our Lady of Light* when the tragic trip to Baler was made.

In the dining room of her Baguio home, Doña Aurora treasured a painting of Philippine fruits which was salvaged from the burning Pasay home at liberation time. Doña Aurora related that this painting was saved by a Swiss gentleman who rolled it up in a bamboo tube and carried it with him all the way to Switzerland and then to the United States to restore the painting to the Quezons.

Table tennis with the President was her favorite indoor sport. The late President, it was said, lost many a game to his charming wife although he was considered adept at the game.

Because she hated to disappoint any well-meaning friend, Doña Aurora braved stormy weather to fulfill scheduled appointments. When she spoke at the celebration of the National Heroes' Day at the foot of the Bonifacio

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monument in Balintawak, Caloocan, Rizal, she exposed herself to a drizzling rain, and only an umbrella and a raincoat held over her head by Mayor Ponciano A. Bernardo of Quezon City protected her. On this occasion a rainsoaked row of 2,000 heard Doña Aurora urge "Filipinos to keep aglow the memory of revolutionary heroes."

She radiated dignity among her friends who kept closely attached to her. Her natural intelligence kept her company alive and pleasant. Even her husband's enemies found her unaffected by the temporary upheavals in Philippine politics. In fact, some leaders of the opposition group were among the loyal friends of the Quezons. As expressed by Senator Emiliano Tria Tirona, quondam opposition stalwart, but the *compadre* of Doña Aurora, she being the godmother of his youngest child, "In spite of the bitter political struggle that took place between her beloved husband, President Quezon, and our opposition group, she and her husband tried their best to maintain their personal friendly relations with us, showing that the stringent political relations were not a bar to the continuance of personal relations. I will always remember her solicitude for her goddaughter, who was seriously ill when she was baptized, and also her affection and attention to our little baby boy during our trip from Europe to Manila in 1933."

In return, her intimate friends made it a point to reciprocate her good deeds by making her happy on her birthday anniversaries. On this day—February 19—a torch parade was usually held leading to the home of Doña Aurora, followed by an *asalto* (surprise party) and "Happy

-An analysis of the handwriting of Doña Aurora, based on the manner she signed her name, "Aurora A. Quezon", was made by Linda Marquez and published in her column, *Speaking of Handwriting*, in the *Manila Times* sometime ago. Her analysis, though quite brief, is a confirmation of the exemplary character of Doña Aurora. She wrote:

"In whatever circumstances Aurora Quezon found herself,

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Birthday" wishes climaxed by a radio program for the entertainment and benefit of the people.

From one of her good friends, Mrs. Trinidad H. Legarda, came this sincere estimation of Doña Aurora: "the gentlest, sweetest, and noblest of all Filipino women." Elaborating further on the virtues of Doña Aurora, she said: "Among her many lovable traits, the most outstanding was her ability to treat all kinds of people alike, rich or poor, high or low, white or brown. Her greatest asset was her big Christian heart which was a haven for many who were in trouble and sought her wise counsel. We admired her level-headedness in mixing with the best and the highest of the land and not losing the common touch. We secretly envied the ease and informality she displayed in meeting her husband's friends and associates who treated her as their peer or even their superior. In truth, this

she conducted herself with ease and appropriateness. As First Lady of the Land, she established a prestige all her own, without detracting from the brilliance of her illustrious husband. Later, as widow of a great President, she retained the love and esteem of her people, with no attempt whatsoever to remain in the limelight. Few women have done, and can do, what she had done....

"This outstanding ability of Mrs. Quezon to adjust herself to changing circumstances is eloquently portrayed by her n (see "Quezon"), which, at first glance looks like a u. Persons whose m's and n's resemble w's and u's respectively possess great powers of adjustment.

"Another characteristic revealed by Mrs. Quezon's letter n is energy. Extremely pointed m's and n's indicate industry and initiative. Mrs. Quezon's industrious nature is too well known to mention in this brief analysis.

"The fact that her a's and o's are sometimes closed and sometimes open reveal sincerity. Those who dealt with Mrs. Quezon can furnish abundant proofs of her sincerity. In fact, in this, she was outstanding. Lack of affection characterized all her dealings.

"But, when she decides on keeping a secret, she could keep it. And, she could be trusted with others' secrets, too. This is demonstrated to us by her knotted o's.

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epitome of a noble and perfect woman was a rare gem of our land, a priceless gift to our nation."

No greater tribute can be paid Doña Aurora than that pronounced by the President of the Marygrove College on the occasion of the conferment of the honorary degree of doctor of laws upon her. In part he said:

"Yes, side by side with your illustrious husband, you have brought to him through all the years, goodly store of comfort and counsel and unfailing encouragement in his public career; in dark days and dreary, as with Moses in the wilderness, you held up his hands and his heart; you seconded every endeavor; when hope seemed to falter, you cheered him ever to more valiant sacrifice, ever to more valiant and unsparing aspiration, for the everlasting weal and welfare of the land he never ceased to love. But in triumph and victory, when a grateful electorate lifted your life-companion at last to the chief magistracy of the nation, it was at your feet that he loved to lay all the laurels of his personal achievements; no public recognition could rival the answering light of admiration that sparkled in your eyes; you were the wife of his bosom, the mother of his children, the guardian angel of his heart and hearth and home."



2.

The Model Farmer and Businesswoman

NOTWITHSTANDING HER multifarious duties as a wife and mother, Doña Aurora had yet time to spare for her varied agricultural and commercial enterprises. To attend to this additional duty she had to commute between Manila and the provinces of Luzon. Her farmstead in Arayat, Pampanga, occupied much of her attention because she wanted to make it a model agricultural project for other landlords to emulate.

On this farm Doña Aurora built a chapel and had a priest assigned there to take care of the religious needs of the people. She saw to it that the children who had not been baptized were eventually christened, and couples who had not been legally married were joined together in lawful wedlock. She worked very hard to put up a hospital where not only her tenants and their families, but also the people living around her farm in Candaba and San Luis in Pampanga and in Cabaio in Nueva Ecija, were taken care of.

She tried hard to provide every tenant with a good house. She made a plan, at her own expense, of the layout of these houses. She made arrangements so that the irrigation system could be extended to Arayat. In fact, before the 70-30 profit-sharing system was executed by the Government she was already practising it with her tenants who found it very satisfactory. She adopted the system as she wanted to correct the maltreatment received by the tenants from their landlords.

Doña Aurora loaned money without any interest to the tenants who paid her back at any time convenient for them. In this way she initiated the move to break the notorious

THE MODEL FARMER AND BUSINESSWOMAN

practice of the landlords of charging usurious rates of interest on loans or having the loans paid in kind, as rice. On the encouragement of her husband-President, Doña Aurora undertook farm experiments to raise the standard of living of the tenants.

Her idea of farming, especially in Central Luzon, was to increase the income of the tenants, to raise their standard of living. At the same time, the farmers would be less idle. So she tried crop rotation so that the land will be planted throughout the year and she exerted efforts to learn from people who know more about farming. She even got a Japanese expert from Formosa to help her produce as many crops within a limited time and area throughout the year as they do now in Japan. If the land is tilled, the men will be kept busy all the year through, was her belief. She was not contented with our system of growing rice as she wanted more yield from the land.

She tried piggery and poultry. When the World War II broke out late in 1941, she was trying to cross the native carabao with the Indian buffalo in order to put up a dairy so that her tenants would have milk to drink. She also raised chickens. From her ramie crop she could get money in two weeks' time. The watermelons raised in her farm were sold two months ahead of the regular watermelon crop. In her farmstead in Arayat, she set up a big orchard, and where one day she had every friend of the family plant a fruit tree.

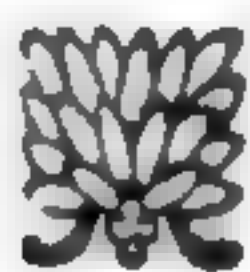
Her home in Quezon City was full of plants because she was equally interested in flower gardening. She loved orchids to such an extent that she had an orchid house built in the Malacañan Park. This was destroyed by the Japanese during the occupation period (1942-1945). She was the only First Lady of the Land so far—and there have been four already—who was showered with orchids. Inasmuch as she was very particular about her grounds, the delicate task of garden planning was entrusted to no other

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than to Dr. Eduardo Quisumbing, renowned Filipino botanist and director of the National Museum, who personally did the landscaping and gardening in Malacañan and in the Quezon summer house in Baguio. This work earned for Dr. Quisumbing the sobriquet, "Gardener of Malacañan."¹

She organized the Acoje Mining Company. In fact, the word "Acoje" was coined to represent the three women investors: "A" for Aurora; "Co" for Consuelo Cuyugan; and "Je" for Jesusa Arroyo Viuda de Lacson. She was very successful during the mining boom in 1936 and 1937. She left 21,000 shares in the Far East Oil Development Co., Inc., and 14,000 shares in the San Mauricio Mining Co. Just before she died she went into the real estate business and constructed several houses in Baguio, Quezon City, and Manila. She also had fishponds in Pampanga. As a Filipina she was a good example of an enterprising and successful businesswoman.

¹This was not the first time that Dr. Quisumbing devoted his time and efforts to the Malacañan grounds, for as early as the administration of former Governor General Dwight F. Davis he already started landscaping the Malacañan Park and grounds of the Mansion House in Baguio upon the personal request of the Chief Executive.



3.

The Exemplary Social Worker

".... she was a person of great distinction and yet so selfless and generous was she that she completely surrendered herself and her personality to whoever she served and gave allegiance to."

IN HER lifetime Doña Aurora's main concern was the people's welfare. Her one obsession was her ceaseless work for humanity. As a result, her varied humanitarian endeavors and activities brought her to the fore of every movement in which she lent her noble name, gave her invaluable help, and extended her wholehearted cooperation. Her distinct service to the teeming millions brought her popularity. The name—Doña Aurora—became a by-word in every home, and the poor and the needy who depended on charity day in and day out learned not only to like and respect her, but also to adore her.

The charitable work of Doña Aurora knew no bounds. She distinguished herself by showing time and again her deep concern for the social, physical, spiritual, and economic welfare of the indigent and the sick, the homeless and the friendless. By her invaluable and exemplary social service she was looked up to as the ministering angel and guardian of thousands of people.

There was no charitable movement in the Philippines which did not seek her sponsorship or patronage. There was no work of charity that merited the name in which she was not identified and in which her services were not offered free. Even the time and efforts of her two daugh-

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ters—Maria Aurora and Maria Zencida—were regimented by her when needed for a worthy cause. Her unselfish devotion to charity made the people to rally behind her projects which were generally crowned with success.

Doña Aurora manifested her interest in social work early in life. It was in her beloved Baler that she began her community service. She had just returned to her hometown from her studies in Manila when she displayed the spirit of charity leadership by organizing the first civic society among the young women. Since that was sometime in 1911, the organization she founded was believed to be one of the first women's civic associations ever formed in the Philippines. Records show that the Baler civic society even antedated by many years the Woman's Club of Manila. Being the organizer, she became the president, an honor bestowed upon her by a grateful community.

"Under her administration, the association was instrumental in urging the municipal council the passage of important measures for the welfare of the inhabitants of the town," an early account related. "On account of bad water, dysentery was prevalent in Baler, and through the activities of the society, the people were educated in drinking boiled water. Smallpox was also prevalent then, and the society taught the people the importance of putting those attacked by the disease under quarantine. The establishment of barrio schools in the town was due to the efforts of the association," it further stated.

As early as 1913, Doña Aurora, then popularly known in Manila as Miss Aragon, helped found the Asociacion de Damas Filipinas, a charitable organization which now maintains the Settlement House for unfortunate women and orphaned children. It was also through her initiative that the Community Health and Nursing Association of Manila was later organized. At one time she became the president of the Asociacion Catolica de Damas Filipinas,

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an organization intended to promote the welfare of Catholic women in the country.

After her marriage to Manuel L. Quezon, then the President of the Senate, Doña Aurora interested herself in the relief of suffering mankind. The years before the World War II came, during which her husband was the chief executive of the land, she and the President stood sponsors at the birthday anniversary ball of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt of the United States which fell on January 30. One-half of the proceeds of this nationwide affair was retained in the Philippines to insure the campaign against the dreadful disease of infantile paralysis, and the remainder was forwarded to the United States.

Doña Aurora, as she was affectionately called by her people, was the honorary president of the White Cross, a charitable organization whose purpose is to promote the moral, mental, spiritual and physical well-being of the laborers and their children. The association is pledged to help in the building of a new, strong, and happy nation. Its motto is to serve labor, and true to it the White Cross began its task by taking under its care the numerous children of tuberculosis laborers.

Founded by Mrs. Victoria Lopez-Araneta, the White Cross has received the endorsement of government officials, physicians, and humanitarian entities. It owns and maintains the first tuberculosis preventorium in the Philippines—the Quezon Preventorium—which is located on a four-hectare estate on Santolan street, in San Juan, Rizal. The institution¹ is unique for it is a hospital for normal children of diseased parents. Aside from being a hospital, it is a school, a playground, and, above all, a home.

¹Its medical staff of physicians and nurses is assisted by the Sisters of Charity of the La Concordia College. Its initial capacity of 300 beds were all donated by Manila businessmen and sugar barons from Negros. The children are scheduled to stay from three to four years at the preventorium to prepare them to return to their homes without any great danger of contracting tuberculosis.

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Doña Aurora also gave her wholehearted support to the cause of the white plague—tuberculosis. Her personal interest in the eradication of the disease was due to the fact that her husband fell a victim to it, having contracted the illness while still in his early forties. In 1948, besides consenting to be the chairman of the board of governors of the Philippine National Red Cross, she was chosen the senior honorary vice-president of the Philippine Tuberculosis Society and at the same time the senior member of the board of directors of eleven.²

In the anti-tuberculosis fund campaign conducted in that year, Doña Aurora successfully rallied the people behind the drive. In the nationwide radio hookup at the official opening of the campaign, she broadcast to her audience the fact that the "Philippine government alone cannot accomplish much in its fight against tuberculosis if the people remain indifferent and fail to give their whole-hearted support and cooperation." She also stressed that "whatever the government authorities might do along this line would be in vain if the people neglect to do what is expected of them in the concerted fight against the common enemy."

She was likewise instrumental in the organization of the Girl Scout movement in the Philippines. Upon her encouragement and initiative the first Manila troop for Filipino girls was formed at the St. Anthony's Girl's Institution under the guidance of the Mother Directress. Her unstinted support insured the success of the national movement which now counts with troops in all important centers of population throughout the Philippines. Doña Aurora had a firm belief in girl scouting which has provided young Filipino girls with various opportunities for training for

²Other distinguished personages in the board at the time were President of the Philippines Elpidio Quirino (who was the honorary president), Secretary of Health Antonio Villarama (the other honorary vice-president), Ambassador Carlos P. Romulo, Major General Basilio J. Valdes (retired), and Drs. Miguel Cañizares and Antonio G. Sison.

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leadership and citizenship, and at the same time has afforded them the pleasure of enjoying an international fellowship with the girls of other nations, thereby fostering lasting peace and goodwill among all peoples.

Her social service included the pleasant task of visiting public and private hospitals during which she personally made inquiries from the patients of their needs and how they fared along. Physicians, nurses, and attendants all dressed in immaculate white usually accompanied Doña Aurora in these regular visits which both hospital personnel and patients had always looked forward to and had come to like and love.

Jointly with her husband-President, Dona Aurora started another form of social service which, at Yuletide season, gladdened the hearts of Manila's poor and waifs. Every Christmas, they played Santa Claus to thousands of children in the different districts of Manila by personally distributing, in an afternoon set specially for the purpose, the Yuletide bounty from Malacanán consisting of more than 20,000 packages containing toys, clothes, and sweetmeats accompanied by Christmas cards bearing their photographs. So to the thousands of young children of poor Manilans, Doña Aurora readily became known as the Lady Bountiful of the Philippines for the gratuitous Christmas parties she gave during the presidential term of her husband which started in 1935.

So deeply in love was Doña Aurora with her charity activities that not even the death of her husband in 1941 made her give up her work and retire in the seclusion of private life. Instead, upon her return to the Philippines from the United States in 1946, she immediately plunged herself to her first love—social service—and became active in helping speed up the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the war-devastated areas of the Philippines. She also engaged herself in ameliorating the sufferings of her

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people, including the veterans, in which task she was much engrossed at the time of her death.

Of her devotion to her postwar work and service to the Philippines, former Senate President Jose Avelino remarked: "When that frightful holocaust was over and she came back for a well-earned rest, she saw that there was work to do. There were suffering widows and orphans to take care of. Using all the resources she could command and declining a pension she justly deserves until the last war widow and orphan is taken care of by the government, Mrs. Quezon contributed a big job in laying the foundation of our present program for the rehabilitation of our war victims."

When to Doña Aurora was broached the plan of a group of civic-spirited investors in education to found the Philippine College of Commerce and Business Administration (PCCBA), she readily consented to join them in the enterprise, thereby becoming closely identified with the growth and expansion of this progressive institution which, at the opening of the academic year in 1950, became a full-fledged university with the name, University of the East.

Not only that but Doña Aurora, as in other instances when she loaned "her prestige and personality to worthy public efforts," she acted as sponsor in the blessing first of the R. Papa building which now houses the high school department of the PCCBA and later of the Dalupan Hall together with President of the Philippines Elpidio Quirino. To perpetuate her association in life with the PCCBA, Francisco Dalupan, president of the University of the East, had a bronze plaque placed at the main entrance of the Dalupan Hall. In fond recollection of her Dalupan said: "She was a great lady, one dearly beloved by our people and country, partly because she was the widow of a great Filipino patriot but also an admirable personage in her own right."



The birth anniversary of the late Mrs. A. V. Lopez in 1950 was marked by the unveiling of her oil portrait by Fernando Lopez. A. V. Lopez was the wife of Fernando Lopez and her only surviving daughter, Quizon-Batucanino, of the Philippine Women's Club.

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The Filipino Nurses' Association had "a great sympathizer and a staunch sponsor" in Doña Aurora. At one time when she was approached by the nurses on behalf of a worthy cause, Doña Aurora worked and obtained P5,000 from the International League of Red Cross Societies in Geneva to be spent in the treatment of six nurses who had fallen victims of tuberculosis during the World War II.

When the Philippine Government approved Commonwealth Act No. 693 providing a monthly pension of one thousand pesos to Doña Aurora "in recognition of your just merits and as a humble tribute to the memory of our late great leader," President Manuel L. Quezon, she declined to make personal use of it and instead advised President of the Philippines Manuel Roxas of her decision to donate the money to the special fund then being raised under the auspices of a committee headed by Mrs. Roxas and the then Vice-President of the Philippines Elpidio Quirino for the relief of sick and disabled Filipino war veterans, war widows and orphans.

In her letter to President Roxas, Doña Aurora said, in part:

"When this pension was first remitted to me last December, 1945, I found it necessary to decline acceptance of the same because I felt that there was more pressing need of taking care of countless war widows and orphans who urgently had to be immediately succored even for the bare necessities of life. They were clamoring for assistance and their plight demanded preferential consideration by the Government. Faced with the situation I noted upon my arrival, I could not in good conscience receive the benefits of the government assistance while so many of my less fortunate sisters and their orphaned children were so much more in need of such aid.

"I am happy to know that among the first acts of the Government of the Republic was to set aside the sum of P1,000,000 for the relief and rehabilitation of

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war widows, orphans, invalids, and other indigent war victims who are not entitled to the benefits provided by existing law. In view of this information, I hereby withdraw my objection to receiving the said pension, but in memory of my late beloved husband who always felt a very deep concern for the fate of the unfortunate victims of the past war, I request that the amount you have sent to me be accepted as my contribution to the funds already raised for the benefit of the said indigent widows and orphans of the last war."

The Filipino workingmen considered Doña Aurora "a dear friend of the masses" because they realized that she "dedicated a great part of her services to the nation" for their welfare. In their own words, Doña Aurora "spared no efforts towards the alleviation of the plight of the common tao."

A further evidence of her solicitude for Philippine labor was demonstrated when, in response to a request made on her, she prepared a message to be read during the annual nationwide observance of Labor Day in the Philippines on May 1. However, her tragic death on April 28, 1949, prevented her from joining the people in the celebration. In her message she said:

"For a country that has just undergone the rather arduous phase set by a nascent industry, the Philippines is to be congratulated for its phenomenal advance in the field of labor-capital relations.

"It is most noteworthy that labor has taken complete cognizance of the role it has to take in the formulation of a sound and enduring basis around which harmonious economy devolves. That local labor, young in the ways of trade unionism, has militated against the unsound manifestations of capitalism and at the same time taken due recognition of its defined rights and prerogatives, edifies the laborers, evokes the respect of the capitalist and fosters that smooth relation between the two."

THE INFIRMARY SOCIAL WORKER

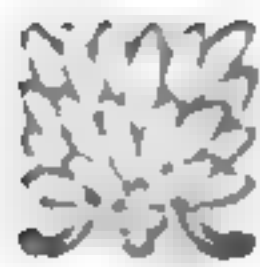
Although Doña Aurora actively helped innumerable civil and charitable movements, yet in all cases she always preferred to be relegated to the background. Because she had such a keen interest in her distinctive work along social, educational, cultural, and religious lines, only the few persons who were well-versed on her varied humanitarian and social work could give them and they had not all yet had opportunity to give due credit to her achievements. Her work, as she worked, the fruits of her labor showed themselves. And her outstanding public service was recognized in the days when fitting honors were bestowed upon her both in the Philippines and abroad.

Having devoted her time to the service of humanity, her works and her influence were far-reaching. Her various humanitarian and social work had reached far and wide, but when her work was recognized toward from the Marygrove College of Detroit, Michigan, in the form of the highest collegiate distinction—the honorary degree of doctor of laws, the same that her husband-President received from the University of learning and culture in the Philippines, the United States of America.

In conferring the honor to Doña Aurora, the Marygrove College authorities were saying out her distinctive labors in different fields of endeavor. "Foremost as we have been moved by your devotion for social welfare, for education, for the betterment of our year devotion to the poor to the most unfortunate, the numberless unfortunate who have fallen upon the thorns of life, your grateful people cherish your patriotic desire, and from their hearts give you the name of Grace no more fervent and wholesome praise than that, that, under the inspiration of your character and work, they may preserve all the noblest graces of their glorious Catholic past, and build in the Philippines a living less than a happy and prosperous Republic that shall outlive even the vanished splendours of the golden ages of the blest," recited the citation.

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A grateful people remembers Doña Aurora even in her death. A posthumous award, consisting of a medal and a certificate of merit, was conferred upon her by the Women's Civic Assembly in 1949 in recognition of "her interest and activity in human welfare and public affairs which continued even after the expiration of the term of office of her husband." Mrs. Zeneida Quezon-Buenacaminio, her only surviving daughter, received the award in the name of her illustrious mother.



The Distinguished Feminist Leader

IN THE PHILIPPINES the Filipino women were not only the first to demand the right of suffrage by their own efforts, they have been taking an active part in all the political movements. It is true that the women of the Philippines have not yet won the right to vote, but until the woman's suffrage act was passed, they worked hard for the candidacy of either their husband or that of their party's candidate. Many Filipino women were successful political leaders. They were the organizers of many campaigns for the election of their husbands and other candidates.

If the women were not successful in getting a politician they joined their husbands in many an undertaking. They were active in the movement for reform in return, the men were active in the women's movement and utilized the women's power for their own projects. Now, in the Philippines the Filipino woman has indeed become an indispensable instrument of progress. As she plays an important and significant role, her number is taken into account when politics is the talk of the moment.

Delfina Aragon was the nation's most outstanding feminist leader in her time. Like her husband-politician she worked a great influence on both the politicians and the electorate in many instances. In the field of endeavor she knew the full and grave responsibilities that confronted the Filipino woman. Talking once to the Baguio Women's Club, she counseled the members to help insure clean elections and to exercise great care in electing candidates who should be true representatives of their sex.

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On one occasion she grasped the opportunity of telling prospective women candidates of the dangers confronting them. She then remarked that "not all elective posts are appropriate for women." "A woman is not fit for a post requiring her presence at the scenes of calamity or at accidents any hour of the day or night. Any woman candidate for such post should first obtain her husband's consent. I believe that the more appropriate posts for women are those of assemblymen, board members or councilors," she added.

Intellectual and moral fitness, not sex, she emphasized, should be sought in a candidate. She then recalled the incident which her husband, the late President Quezon, and the provincial officials of Nueva Ecija met, and which experience, she knew, no woman could have withstood. When the Quezon party was inspecting the ravages of a storm that lashed the province, the frail bamboo raft on which they had embarked was tossed by the flood waters, so they were badly buffeted by the winds.

Interest in woman suffrage gained momentum among the women leaders in the Philippines during the visit in August of 1912 of two noted suffragists—Mrs. Carrie Chapman Catt of America and Dr. Aletta Jacobs of Holland. Mrs. Catt spoke brilliantly of the great advantages which suffrage would bring to the Filipino women at a conference with Filipino and foreign ladies at the Manila Hotel.

The movement, however, did not win further ground until after the Filipino women cooperated with America during the First World War (1914-1918). They organized themselves and then they campaigned successfully for subscriptions to the Liberty Bond; they talked to government officials; they gave benefits everywhere; they also joined the civic parade in which 6,000 women formed themselves into an American flag.

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These varied activities of the Filipino women in the campaign for the cause of democracy impressed Governor General Francis Burton Harrison with their efficiency and loyalty, so that in his message to the fourth Philippine Legislature on October 16, 1918, he recommended the granting of the right to vote to the women.

With great enthusiasm, several women leaders immediately met at the Manila Hotel on October 28, 1918, in which a resolution advocating suffrage for the Filipino women was approved. However, the women met an uphill fight in the cause that they espoused, and it was only in 1933 when the Philippine Senate approved the woman suffrage bill which, in turn, was signed by Governor General Frank Murphy on December 7, 1933, that they won their case. This bill became Act No. 4112.

However, the forthcoming establishment of the Commonwealth Government necessitated the drafting of a Constitution for the Philippines. One of the subjects taken up in the Constitutional Convention was woman suffrage. After a spirited deliberation on the matter, the Convention adopted the provision "that the National Assembly (of the Commonwealth) shall extend the right of suffrage to women, if in a plebiscite which shall be held for that purpose within two years after the adoption of the Constitution, no less than three hundred thousand women otherwise qualified should vote affirmatively on the question."

A bill to this effect was then presented in the National Assembly and later approved on September 30, 1936, and on the same day it became Commonwealth Act No. 34 following the affixing of the signature of the President of the Philippines (Mamuel L. Quezon) on it. This act stipulated that a plebiscite on woman suffrage be held on April 30, 1937, and it required at least 300,000 affirmative votes before women could be granted the right to vote. As the women were well organized at the time, they garnered 447,725 votes in favor of suffrage. Those who voted "No"

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totalled only 44,307. Despite charges of fraud which reached the Department of the Interior, whose secretary then was Elpidio Quirino, the plebiscite committee of the National Assembly recommended the ratification of the results, which was done in a special session held in August-September, 1937. This overwhelming majority explicitly manifested the solid desire of the Filipino women to be suffragists like their sisters in other lands where the democratic way of life prevails.

In the pre-war days (years before 1941) Doña Aurora had been a political power. Knowing that her husband, the President, could not refuse her, aspirants for preference and position sought her help. Whoever had her blessing was politically made. For this reason, there were hundreds of well-connected men and women who, in their gratitude, awaited their political cue from her soon after her return to the Philippines from the United States where she spent forty-five months because of the World War II (1941-1945). This, together with the spiritual power of Quezon then living alone in her, made her a political figure to reckon with.

Her return indeed evoked much political speculation. She was already a widow then, her husband having died in 1944. As she came shortly before the presidential election of 1946, people kept on talking and asking these questions: Whom will she favor in the next presidential race, Osmeña or Roxas? Can she keep the Nacionalista party from breaking up? Will she be a candidate for a public office, perhaps for a seat in the Senate? It should be remembered that in this election, held on April 23, 1946, two stalwart leaders of the majority party—Osmeña and Roxas—faced each other in the presidential fight.

In this election in which the winner became the last President of the Commonwealth and also the first Chief Executive of the Republic of the Philippines, Doña Aurora personally stumped for Candidate Manuel Roxas in Laguna

5.

The Noble Humanitarian

THE RED CROSS movement, which in the last fifty years has spread throughout the world, is not new in the Philippines, for almost at the same time that the first Red Cross societies were being organized in the United States of America and other countries the Philippines was also organizing its own.

It was in the hectic period of the Philippine Revolution in the late years of the nineteenth century that General Emilio Aguinaldo, President of the Philippine Republic of the time, organized a Red Cross association bearing the name *Asociacion de Damas de la Cruz Roja* for the purpose of coordinating "the humanitarian work of the women. He named his wife, the late Hilaria del Rosario, the head of the society whose headquarters were in Malolos, Bulacan.

As Dr. Encarnacion Alzona, noted woman researcher and authority in history, found out, "the members' worked indefatigably, soliciting contributions of all kinds—clothes, food, cigarettes, and money—which they in turn distributed to the needy." The society had branches in thirteen provinces. To prove that the Red Cross was not formed to serve only the Filipino revolutionists, the members also took care of the sick and wounded soldiers of the enemies—the Spaniards and the Americans. It had also its nurses, and to Cresenciana Sanchez San Agustin de Santos went

¹The prime qualifications of the members were: must have good reputation and must be at least 14 years old; the minimum age for the officers was fixed at 25 years.

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the credit of being the "first Filipino volunteer nurse" who saw service in the hospital of Imus, Cavite, sometime in 1896.

On the other hand, the Red Cross movement which was born in 1895 was introduced into the Philippines in 1905, when the American Red Cross took the necessary initial steps to set up a branch to meet the social welfare needs of the Filipinos. Affiliated to the American Red Cross, the branch was designated the Philippine Chapter of the American Red Cross.

In 1934 Manuel L. Quezon, then President of the Senate and acknowledged political leader of the Filipino people, initiated the attempts to establish an independent Philippine Red Cross simultaneous with the change of the political status of the Philippines from a dependency of the United States of America to a Commonwealth.

However, his efforts did not prosper because the terms of the Geneva Convention provide that a nation must be a signatory to the Red Cross Treaty before it can establish an independent Red Cross society. Since the Tydings-McDuffie independence law did not empower the Commonwealth government to negotiate treaties with other countries, the Philippine Red Cross could not be made independent of the American Red Cross to which it was a chapter.

So, shortly after the inauguration of the Philippine Republic on July 4, 1946, concrete steps were immediately taken to organize an independent Philippine National Red Cross. Manuel Roxas, the first President of the Philippine Republic, affixed his signature to the Treaty of Geneva and the Prisoners of War Convention on February 14, 1947. This presidential action was followed by the ratification of these two international agreements by the Philippine Senate on February 18; and then on March 22 the Philippine National Red Cross charter, which had

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been approved by the Congress of the Philippines, was signed by the President.

After the incorporation, the Philippine National Red Cross transmitted its application for recognition as an independent entity to the International Red Cross Society at Geneva, Switzerland. Approval of its recognition was received by Doña Aurora on March 29, 1947.

At the time Doña Aurora was chairman of both the board of governors and the central executive committee of the Philippine National Red Cross.² She was unanimously elected to these positions following the resignation of Major General Basilio J. Valdes in 1946 when the society was still a dependency of the American Red Cross. She was the first woman to head this charitable institution in the Philippines. Her election was hailed as timely because the Philippine Red Cross was destined to play a major role in the tremendous reconstruction and rehabilitation of the Philippines that had just been started.

Since at the time of its reconstitution shortly after the liberation of the country from the Japanese enemy in 1945, the Philippine Red Cross was in a prostrate condition, the offer made to Doña Aurora to lead the society in its uphill battle towards recovery was not a mere overture but was impelled by a real need; and her gracious acceptance was "in effect the best and finest thing ever to happen to the Philippine Red Cross" then.

In acknowledging her election Doña Aurora said that "participation in the activities of the Philippine Red Cross

²The Red Cross is governed by a board of governors with a membership of 30 men and women. Six of them are appointed by the President of the Philippines, 15 are elected by the delegates chosen from the different chapters. These 21 members, in turn, elect the remaining nine. From among the members of the board are elected 11 to compose the central executive committee which exercises the powers of the board when the latter is not in session. The chairman of the board is also the chairman of the committee.

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is a solemn obligation on the part of every true citizen of the Philippines" since "the Philippine Red Cross is an organization of the Filipino people." On his part President Roxas paid high tribute to Doña Aurora for accepting the position. He declared that she "had undertaken this great and humanitarian work because of her deep love for the people."

Her election was announced to the nation through the press and the radio. In a special broadcast commemorating the event, Doña Aurora explained the reason that prompted her to accept the position, thus:

"When I was requested a few weeks ago to serve as chairman of the Red Cross Central Executive Committee, I gave the matter serious thought and consideration before making my decision. The challenge of the opportunity offered me, however, influenced my decision considerably. * * Service with the Philippine Red Cross is a precious privilege and a golden opportunity to play a direct part in the vast recovery program operating throughout the country today."

On another occasion Doña Aurora disclosed the ideology that made her join the Red Cross organization. She said: "I have always shared with my late husband's feeling that the good of mankind should be the ultimate aim of all and every nation. It is that ideology that has prompted me to give my efforts to the Red Cross movement, to unite men and women from all over the world in a common pursuit of a single idea—understanding and goodwill."

Displaying emotion as she started her address in that special broadcast Doña Aurora made known her feelings and those of her family during the long war years when they were living in "exile" in the United States of America. "Although we have been away from your midst," she told her listeners, "my family and I have always been with you

* In a letter to Go Puan Seng, publisher of the *Fookien Times* of Manila.

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in our thoughts. I doubt if any other group of individuals in the United States thought more of the Philippines during the Japanese occupation than we did. Even during the liberation, when there was reason for rejoicing everywhere, our joy was not complete, for we knew that in the bitter struggle that raged throughout the archipelago, the Filipino people were suffering untold hardships and incredible misery."

Commenting on her acceptance of the chairmanship, a Manila newspaper said in its editorial that Doña Aurora "could have rested on the laurels of her husband for it was with her aid and comfort that he had achieved greatness. But because she is dedicated to the service of her people and country, she is now devoting the last days of her fruitful life to works of charity and welfare."

The subsequent recognition granted to the Philippine National Red Cross by the International Red Cross Society in Geneva, Switzerland, was received with jubilation by the Government and the people of the Philippines. Of it Doña Aurora said:

"It is of special gratification to me to hail the independence of the Philippine National Red Cross, an unfulfilled dream of my late husband. By this accomplishment, the Filipino people have achieved a new mature status in social organizations, and have obtained a powerful mechanism by which they can help themselves. We pledge the best efforts of the Philippine National Red Cross to the intelligent service of our people, and we will strive to maintain the high standards of performance set by the American Red Cross, whose generosity and inspiring guidance have given us this opportunity."

Doña Aurora further elucidated on the significance of the independence of this humanitarian organization in her address delivered at the independence ceremonies of the Philippine National Red Cross at the Malacañan Palace grounds on April 15, 1947. Said she:

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"I consider this occasion one of the most significant in the colorful history of our country. This event represents one of the greatest and most worthwhile achievements of the Filipino people. It symbolizes, in a tangible way, the ardent desire of the Filipino people to help one another through the medium of an organization entirely devoted to the ideals of humanitarianism, without regard for social status, religious affiliation, nationality or political creed.

"To me, personally, the independence of the Philippine National Red Cross is doubly meaningful, because it is the fulfillment of a fervent dream of my late husband. This was one of his cherished aspirations. I feel highly privileged and honored to see that aspiration take the form of reality this afternoon.

"On behalf of the Philippine National Red Cross, I wish to make public our acceptance of the responsibilities which the establishment of an independent Red Cross Society imposes upon us, and likewise our profound appreciation for the heroic efforts of everyone—living and dead—who has contributed in some measure to the attainment of that dream.

"To His Excellency, President Manuel Roxas, I wish to express the appreciation of the Philippine National Red Cross for his generous cooperation in all matters affecting the welfare of our organization, particularly those relating to our preparation for independence. To the members of our Congress, who approved our legislative charter, I also wish to say a few words of gratitude for the interest they have shown in our society.

"To the American people, who, through the American Red Cross, helped establish the independent Philippine National Red Cross, I wish to say, from the bottom of my heart, 'We thank you.' To the members of the International Red Cross, we of the Philippine National Red Cross, wish to say, 'We pledge to do our best in the discharge of our functions and obligations as an autonomous, self-governing Red Cross Society.'

"And lastly, to the people of the Philippines, whose Red Cross this is, I say, 'Let us do our best to make

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our Red Cross, the Philippine National Red Cross, truly an instrument of service and mercy whereby the more favored among us may help the less fortunate."

Then to cap it all, the American Red Cross, through Philip E. Ryan, its director of international activities, presented a Red Cross flag to the Philippine National Red Cross as a "tangible indication of the interest of the American Red Cross in the Philippine National Red Cross." In accepting the gift during the simple but symbolic ceremony, Doña Aurora, on behalf of the Philippine National Red Cross, said, "We are deeply grateful to the American Red Cross for this significant token of friendship and goodwill."

During her incumbency as Red Cross chairman, Doña Aurora held regular office hours at her modest office at the Red Cross headquarters in Manila to attend to official papers, decide on current problems, review the accomplishments of the society, answer correspondence, and swap comments and good-natured jokes with the Red Cross personnel. Her multifarious responsibilities made people to wonder how, despite her advance age, she could still attend to her work. Usually Doña Aurora offered this explanation with a reassuring grin, "Serving the less fortunate among us is no work at all; I enjoy it." In this work she received no compensation or per diems and allowances of any sort because the position is honorary. But this did not mean that she was a mere figurehead in the organization for she religiously performed the task that confronted her from day to day.

When failing health intervened in her Red Cross work, she limited her office hours to Tuesday and Friday mornings. But even then she had orders that she be kept in close touch with all Red Cross activities. No hour of the day or night, even during her siesta time, but that she could be and was approached by the Red Cross officials for guidance and decision. "No Red Cross activity was too arduous, but she stuck to it through," a Red Cross official

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remarked. "She epitomized the soul of the nation. No face had ever aged so beautifully, carving onto itself the noble reach of the heart within the wealth of achievement her life had seen fulfillment to," opined Mrs. Loreto Paras-Sulit, Philippine Junior Red Cross supervisor.

In the opinion of Doña Aurora the success of the Red Cross depended entirely upon the financial and moral support extended by the people. During her administration the organization was engaged in various social service and relief activities and it needed at least P1,500,000 to cover these vital services. This fact she emphasized to the people when she said:

"Just how strong and effective this Red Cross of ours will be will depend upon how strong and effective the people want it to be. Just how useful a role this organization will continue to play in the lives of the people of this country is dependent upon just how useful they believe it should be,—and their belief should be manifested in terms of concrete, financial, and material support."

The Red Cross fund drive of 1946 was the first undertaken under the chairmanship of Doña Aurora. To boost this campaign she appealed to the nation for full support. Speaking in Tagalog, she pointed out that in view of the numerous activities of the organization, her countrymen should "contribute the most they could to make the drive a success."

Doña Aurora stressed the fact that every contributor to the Red Cross fund campaign became automatically a member "irrespective of the amount he or she gives." She said that the Red Cross drive "is for everybody and not just for certain groups of people." She pointed out that the services of the Red Cross are "extended to every man, woman, and child when they are in need of it, without discrimination as to social status, race, color, creed, or political belief." The Red Cross reaches every individual with-

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in the family, she said. "Only through the help of everybody can the Red Cross exist and perform its mission to bulwark humanity against suffering."

With her check of one thousand pesos (P1,000) Doña Aurora became one of the first individuals to donate to that Red Cross fund campaign.

Within the Red Cross society is the Junior Red Cross whose members, composed mostly of young boys and girls studying in the grades, help the adult members in the humane service. Of the Junior Red Cross, Doña Aurora was extremely proud because the more than 400,000 members were all trained for leadership and their service was pregnant with activities which contributed extensively to the health, safety and general welfare of the community and the nation, as well as in the building of peace and friendship among the peoples of different climes. "Today the Philippine Junior Red Cross stands well organized and ready for service," Doña Aurora pointed out. "I am confident that through the goodwill, the practicability and the educational values in their service program, they will contribute one of the most inspiring chapters in the Philippine National Red Cross and the country's history."

When Doña Aurora learned that the series of earthquakes and tidal waves which hit Japan resulted in the loss of life and property, she, as chairman of the Philippine National Red Cross, not only expressed her deep sympathy but also offered Red Cross assistance in the form of personnel trained and experienced in disaster relief operations.

Gaining from her experience as a volunteer at work in the blood donor service of the American Red Cross during the World War II while the Quezon family was in the United States of America, Doña Aurora promptly took up the challenge hurled at the Philippine National Red Cross to build up a national blood program, thereby ushering



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it into a new scope of service dedicated to the "alleviation of human suffering." Thus the Red Cross blood bank was started.

Of the patriotic services being rendered to the country by the men and women in the Red Cross, Doña Aurora had nothing but praise and gratitude. She remarked:

"The Red Cross is a service organization and that because of this a considerable portion of its funds go into the salaries of technical personnel who are responsible for enabling the service of the Red Cross to reach the people. The salaries of the Red Cross professional staff amount to P63,281.25 a month. (The Red Cross scale of salaries is comparatively lower than that of commercial establishments, or of the government. Many Red Cross employees are in the service because they love the work). It should be remembered that unless the Red Cross has on its staff trained professional men and women who will direct the various services, it would not succeed in the faithful discharge of its national and international obligations, notwithstanding the many volunteers who are serving the Red Cross free. I should like to cite particularly the members of our board of governors and the many chapter board members, campaign officials, and chairmen and other volunteers throughout the country who are in the service of the Red Cross but are not on its payroll."

Just what Doña Aurora meant to the Red Cross and what this organization was to her can be substantiated by the incident that transpired during her conference with the President of the Philippines when she requested for funds to cover the transportation of the three Filipino educators⁴ who were chosen upon her nomination to make the "study-visit" sponsored by the American Junior Red Cross for conferences in international education and relations in the United States of America.

⁴Antonio Maceda, superintendent of schools for Rizal; Abdon Javier, superintendent of schools for Quezon, and Isaac Decena, superintendent of private schools.

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The "study-visit" project did not provide for the travel expenses of the delegates. Her determination to get the money compelled her to tell the Chief Executive: "If I am persistent about the Red Cross, Mr. President, it is your fault and everyone else who placed me at the head of the Red Cross. I cannot take my position lightly. The people placed me at the head of the Red Cross. I must do my work." And the gracious and noble lady was soon pleased, and the presidential acquiescence made her indeed happy.

In reviewing the notable achievements of the Philippine National Red Cross during the administration of Doña Aurora from 1946 to 1949, Dr. Manuel Lim, who succeeded her as the chairman of the board of governors of the Philippine Red Cross, attributed to her the varied and outstanding activities and accomplishments. Having known of the invaluable services rendered by Doña Aurora to the Red Cross both in Washington, D. C., and in the Philippines, Basil O'Connor, president of the American Red Cross and chairman of its board of governors, called her "a most devoted and inspired leader." On the other hand, President Roxas assured his people that "the direction and control of this humanitarian entity is in capable and honest hands" when he said, "Mrs. Aurora Quezon, the chairman of the board, called upon to direct its policies, is zealously and disinterestedly working to expand the services of the Red Cross. The nation owes her a great debt of gratitude."

The Philippine National Red Cross was greatly enriched spiritually and materially during the leadership of Doña Aurora. At the same time the presence of this peerless woman in the organization during the few years that she was the head lent dignity and color to it. To the hundreds of men and women in the organization she was adored, revered, nay, worshipped! In turn she loved and respected them. She enjoyed their company which she always found wholesome and cordial. She listened attentively to their

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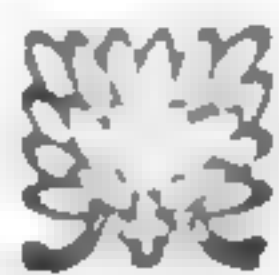
words, she spent precious moments in conversation with them. Indeed, she was mother and angel to one and all! So highly esteemed was she in the entire Red Cross society that the following tribute coming from the lips of Dr. Manuel Lim is paid Doña Aurora:

“ * * * Into the gigantic and exacting task of alleviating human suffering which is the year-round work of the Red Cross, Mrs. Quezon brought to bear all the integrity, all the sacrifice, all the moral and spiritual rectitude that have been the touchstone of the Quezons. Hers was the hand that soothed the fevered brow; that nursed the wound of a society stricken by the cancer of oppression, that sought to shatter the fetters that shackle men to misery, suffering and deprivation.

“Never for a moment did her hand, which held aloft the torch that was the Philippine National Red Cross, falter. * * *

“ * * * And so, her hair silvering, her mind mellowed by knowledge, understanding and goodwill, Mrs. Aurora A. Quezon, in her late years, plunged into Red Cross work....

“The very moment that great and gallant lady bore the prime weight of the Red Cross on her shoulders, the battle that the organization as an independent association had to wage in the Philippines was half won. The leadership she exerted, the warmth she diffused, the zeal with which she led the Philippine National Red Cross from one conquest to another, won for Mrs. Aurora A. Quezon not only increased love and admiration but a glowing, burning reverence—a feeling that is seldom accorded a living human being.”



6.

The Devout Christian

THE FOUR hundred years of Spanish domination of the Philippines (1521-1898)—the principal motive of which was the conversion of the Filipino people to Christianity—produced a telling effect on the life of the women of the past and the present. So great was the influence of the Catholic hierarchy in the country for some time in the past that a vast majority of Filipino families thought that the only institutions of learning wherein their children, especially the girls, could be educated were those supervised and maintained by the Roman Catholic church. For that matter young girls grew up to be devout Catholics who even dedicated their time and exerted efforts to propagate the faith.

As for her, Doña Aurora did her role best as a real Catholic and because the people looked up to her as almost “a saint”, she wielded tremendous influence and power over their religious life during her lifetime. She was not content that she had done her duty to God, for she saw to it also that all others who happened to have been waylaid for the moment from the right path were eventually led back to the only righteous way to God’s throne and His church.

Doña Aurora came from a religious family who enjoyed the blessings of the Franciscan fathers, then in charge of the religious ministration of the inhabitants of her native town, Baler. Because the Aragon family was educated—and therefore spoke Spanish fluently—the Spanish friars and other civil government officials stationed in Baler

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were very close to them. It was from the Franciscan missionaries that she learned to say her prayers, recite her rosary, and attend masses on Sundays and other days of obligation.

A pious Catholic that Doña Aurora was, she sent her children to colleges where they received religious instruction. To her "religion is a great force for good." In her different homes, she always had a family chapel where they heard mass and received the Holy Communion from time to time. In her beautiful home in Baguio, Doña Aurora had a private grotto of the Virgin of Lourdes (*Nuestra Señora de la Virgen de Lourdes*) for whom a yearly novena was held and which later became a traditional fiesta among the Catholics in the Pines City. In her bedroom in her Quezon City home she had a well-planned altar occupying one side with the Lady of Fatima reigning over it. She also had a book about this virgin which she placed on the night table beside her bed to make it available to her all the time.

Because of her outstanding religious activities in Baguio, Doña Aurora was chosen the honorary president of the Baguio Catholic Women's League whose members considered her "the foremost Catholic lady." In this city Doña Aurora, shortly before her death, minced no words in condemning the holding of a carnival during the Holy Week, particularly in "the agonizing days of the Man of Sorrow who carried His cross to Calvary."

Doña Aurora was a very religious woman. At one time when her daughter, Maria Aurora, popularly known as Baby in her lifetime, turned black because of convulsions during an illness, she ran to the altar in her home, knelt before the image of the Virgin and prayed first before ordering a physician called to treat her. Again, when Baby revealed to her that she had been dreaming continually of her father, the late President Manuel L. Quezon, she urged

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her to pray and pray for him as she believed as many others do that all things can be wrought with prayers.

Although deeply religious and went to church and received Holy Communion every day, she was not a fanatic but a practical Catholic. For her work on Catholic action, she was given a decoration by his Holiness, Pope Pius XII. She was mainly responsible for the conversion of many of her close friends into the Catholic religion. One of the media she used was to invite friends to Baguio during her novena. On the last day of the novena they were all asked to receive Communion. Since no one who wanted to retain her friendship dared to displease Doña Aurora, they all obliged her by going to confession and taking Communion, thus becoming Catholic converts.

Doña Aurora was also responsible for her husband's return to the Roman Catholic faith. It will be remembered that about 1907 Quezon, then an assemblyman from Tayabas (now Quezon province), left the fold of the Roman Catholic church to join Freemasonry. At the time of his marriage to her in Hongkong in 1918 he was considered a free thinker. As such, a civil marriage was first performed to suit his convictions, but through the influence of his lovely and beautiful bride they later underwent a Catholic wedding before returning to the Philippines.

The retraction of her husband in later years was attributed mainly to her. It was said that when Quezon became ill and a victim of the white plague, Doña Aurora started to pray for his early recovery. But she realized that she was alone in her devotions. So she told him that God would not probably listen to her prayer and those of her companions if he was not going to join them pray. So, to be with them in their communion with God, Quezon returned to the Roman Catholic fold.

The Laymen's Committee on the Marian Movement gave Doña Aurora the title, "A pillar of the Catholic church

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and a model for all Filipino laity," because of the support and service she rendered to this organization. Singled out as the most outstanding of her activities were the laying of "the cornerstone of a movement which aims to make Christ better known—more deeply loved—more honestly served—through Mary" and her love for "Mary and her people, 'her own little people' that she laid down her life for them."

While living in Los Angeles, California, in the several months immediately following the death of her husband in 1944, Doña Aurora did her bit as a devout Catholic. The philanthropist that she had always been known in her life, she donated a decorated glass window to the Philippine Community church, "the only one of its kind in the United States of America" for being located in "a remodelled fire house." Incidentally, this church also takes extreme pride in possessing a bell which had come all along from the famed church of Antipolo, Rizal, shrine of the miraculous Virgin of Peace and Good Voyage.

Her exemplary and active Christian charity won her recognition from the Ateneo de Manila, sponsors of the Ozanam Award, which, through the Archbishop of Manila, presented her the medal that President Quezon, visibly happy, pinned on her during the commencement ceremonies of the Ateneo on March 20, 1938.

Doña Aurora was the first laywoman to be granted this rare distinction. In expressing her gratitude to the sponsors, she said that "she accepted it not as Mrs. Quezon but as the First Lady for she knows that any honor bestowed on the latter is an honor given to the country."

The award has been named after Frederick Ozanam, founder of the St. Vincent de Paul society, an international Catholic lay organization active in the relief and aid of the poor and the suffering mankind.

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The medal bears the Ozanam profile which symbolizes the nature of the award: service, the Tiara and the Keys designate the Christian and Catholic principles energizing and vitalizing the service; while the shield of the Commonwealth indicates the field in which this service was given.

The award is a recognition of some distinctive and outstanding service by a Catholic layman or woman—service to mankind in the spirit of the evangelical principles of mercy and charity, taught by Christ; in the spirit of that counsel of Christ: "So let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in Heaven." It is likewise a living testimony of the principle that the best citizen is he whose civic life is imbued with deep religious principles.

This signal honor gained for Doña Aurora the noble title of the real Catholic Filipina, worthy to be called "the Mother of the Masses." Her good work in the cause of the poor and sick acquired for her the esteem and gratitude of the people, especially the poor children whom she made happy at a gratuitous Christmas party at the Malacañan grounds every year during the long term of office of her husband-President.

Outstanding Catholic activities of Doña Aurora which were cited were "her persistent care of the orphanages in Manila, her willingness to be Lady Bountiful to thousands of children and hundreds of families at Christmas time, her interest in poor seminarians lasting until they go forth as priest, a consummation not possible without her aid; her concern for catechetical instruction, for rectifying marriages not properly executed according to the church's mind, for men who are face to face with the disheartening circumstances attending their retraction of Masonry. In all these the graceful influence of her faith and its tenets is evident and characterized her life."



*His Grace, Archbishop
 of Manila, with
 Mrs. A. M. M. M.*

*His Grace, Archbishop
 of Manila, with
 Mrs. A. M. M. M.*

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It was the practice of Doña Aurora, which she followed consistently for many years, to visit the different poor districts of Manila, especially Tondo and San Nicolas, and to find the immediate needs of the people. She devoted most of her time to orphans and children of the indigent families, giving them food, clothing, and not infrequently money. She even sent these young boys and girls to school and defrayed their expenses.

Her great interest in ambitious but poor seminarians was well known. She paid either part or the full tuition fees which amounted to about P300 a year for each of some 40 seminarians studying in the different seminaries in the Philippines. In some instances, Doña Aurora gave these boys clothes or even bought them books.

Doña Aurora had always manifested a personal concern for the religious education of her people. Especially interested was she in the catechetical instruction of the children. She helped greatly in the building of several chapels in the suburbs of Manila and saw to it that priests were assigned to look after the religious ministrations of the inhabitants. Sometimes, in order to arouse the interest of the people, she heard mass and received the Holy Communion in these chapels.

Poverty has often been the cause of many destitute families' irregularity. In the cities especially, thousands and thousands of couples live together as man and wife for years without the benefit of clergy. Children have been born to them and usually, like their parents, they have been deprived of a Catholic baptism and confirmation, not because they have deliberately neglected their religious obligation but because their means is often inadequate for their bare necessities.

These couples are usually very poor and therefore cannot afford to pay the marriage fees. So what Doña Aurora did in her lifetime was to arrange quietly their belated

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wedding ceremony. When she could not get the solemnization of the marriage free of charge, she voluntarily paid the fees.

It was a fact that Doña Aurora had a dynamic and magnetic personality all her own. She wielded also a great influence over many people, Filipinos and foreigners alike, of both sexes. Making use of her personal charm, her sympathy, and her great tact she had been instrumental in the return of some prominent men in public life to the Catholic faith.

This distinct Catholic service Doña Aurora performed with tact and diplomacy and "without ever offending those of other religious convictions and at the same time without ever having an inch receded from the high pitched Catholic life in which she was born and bred." Indeed, "hers is an accomplishment that compares in difficulty and complexity to the entirely different task of her husband, the President of the Philippines."

Once settled down in her Gilmore Avenue home in Quezon City shortly after the wartime trip to the United States where the Quezon family spent almost six years—years of separation from their fellow-countrymen, years of anguish and longing, and of anxiety and hope—Doña Aurora made it a point that at seven o'clock every morning she was in the dim chapel of the Carmelite convent where she knelt down at a pew and prayed before the image of Christ Crucified. A devout woman she wore a widow's black for many years. In that God's house, she daily worshipped and pleaded with the Almighty "to give her the strength of body and strength of heart to guide her children and herself in the best possible manner without the aid of the family head."

Upon learning of the "miracle of the roses" which for some time drew hordes of visitors from the provinces, Doña Aurora headed a party of Catholic leaders from

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Manila to the Carmelite convent in Lipa city, in Batangas province, to witness the reported shower of rose petals which happily took place during her different visits. In these showers, the flowers, with their distinct and fragrant scent, were picked up by the surprised and bewildered on-lookers as fast as they dropped from all directions.

Out of respect for her, she was also allowed by the Mother Superior of the convent to interview Miss Teresita Castillo, the Carmelite novitiate who was the object of the apparition of Our Lady Mediatrix of All Grace. The novitiate is the daughter of Judge Modesto Castillo, of the Court of Industrial Relations and former governor of Batangas. After her talk with the novitiate, Doña Aurora said that "in view of the miracle more Filipinos should pray to Our Lady Mediatrix, as requested in the apparition, to the end that peace may reign in the world."

Since the miraculous apparition in 1948, Doña Aurora had made repeated pilgrimages to Lipa and returned to her Quezon City home bringing fresh rose petals. Because of her unfaltering faith and sacrifices, she thought that she was ever safe from dangers what with her constant prayers and devotion wherever she was. Even in that fatal trip to her hometown, Baler, she carried with her the fresh rose petals which had been previously blessed by the Mother Superior of the convent.

In Lipa City she sponsored the building of the concrete church to Our Lady Mediatrix. At the time of her death, Doña Aurora had just acquired a lot in front of the Carmelite convent as it was her evident intention to build a house in that lot where she could be near the miraculous virgin all the time during her visits.

In the rebuilding of the mountain shrine of Our Lady of Peace (*Nuestra Señora de la Paz y Buen Viaje*) in Antipolo, in Rizal province, Doña Aurora assumed the presidency of the national committee for the Antipolo Church Re-

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construction. As such she was responsible for the nationwide campaign for funds for the project. At the ceremonies on the laying of the cornerstone of the proposed church, she told the guests and sponsors numbering more than 5,000 who made the trip from Manila, that since the initial start of the general campaign for funds had begun, she expected that "floods" of offering would soon follow the ceremony.

It was the same Doña Aurora whose appeal to the faithful "to pray and voluntarily reform the evil ways of life" was not only heard but also heeded. Made on the occasion of the annual celebration of the feast of Jesus Nazarene in the Quiapo church in Manila, the brief message follows:

"A Catholic nation like the Philippines is staunch in its belief that Jesus Nazarene continues to bear the Cross as long as we persist in breaking His Commandments.

"All graces are granted to us who seek them from Him. Let us pray that our faith be accepted and strengthened by Him, and by our love and devotion let us strive to share His Cross with Him and relieve Him part of the burden. We can do this by voluntary reformation from evil ways and observance of the divine laws imposed upon us.

"It is within the power of the Almighty to extend salvation to our nation, through our undying faith and all-out love for Our Redeemer.

"Let us keep up the traditional celebration in honor of our beloved Jesus Nazarene."

Shortly before her tragic death, Doña Aurora led pious Catholics, mostly residents in the archdiocese of Manila, in another appeal to the people for the holding of a special celebration in honor of Our Blessed Mother Mary Mediatrix of All Grace on May 31 (1949). The observance called for a national novena beginning on Sunday, May 22, and ending on May 30, to be crowned by a great general Com-

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munion all over the Philippines on May 31, the feast of Our Lady. Main object of the celebration was for the Catholic Philippines to "implore her powerful intercession for the protection of our holy religion, which is being so cruelly persecuted in many countries at the present time; to beseech through her powerful intercession world peace, which is threatened at the present time by another devastating war; and finally and very specially, to obtain peace and charity and good will as well as respect for the law, amongst our own beloved people in the Philippine Islands."

This appeal was considered Doña Aurora's "spiritual testament to her beloved country, and as such the most significant of her good deeds."

When the news of the murder of Doña Aurora reached the Vatican, in Rome, Italy, His Holiness, Pope Pius XII, reigning head of the Roman Catholic church of the time, immediately dispatched the following message to President of the Philippines Elpidio Quirino: "AL CONOCER TRISTE NOTICIA TRAGICA MUERTE EXCMA SEÑORA AURORA QUEZON CUYA PERDIDA AFLIGE ENTERA REPUBLICA QUEREMOS TESTIMONIAR VUECENCIA Y FAMILIA DIFUNTA NUESTRA PATER-NAL CONDOLENCIA OFRECIENDO FERVIENTES SUFRAGIOS POR SU PIADOSA ALMA."

In her death, Doña Aurora was paid tribute by Father Francis Hoza who delivered the sermon during the high requiem mass said at the Saint Vivian's Cathedral for the repose of her soul, during which he emphasized the high spiritual standard set up by Doña Aurora in her lifetime. She could have had "all the honor, worldly pleasures, and everything this world could offer, and she could have been easily lost in the trivialities of life," he said, but Doña Aurora, on the other hand, understood full well the real values of life. "Her spiritual standard did not conform

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with shallow luxuries, temptations of many opportunities, and hence she ignored them all."

In portraying the Christian life led by Doña Aurora, Reverend Hoza recalled that she carried a statuette of the Blessed Virgin Mary in her bosom wherever she went. "Whenever it was possible, Mrs. Quezon did not fail to attend mass, even if going to church would mean extra hardships. If an automobile was not available, she had to ride street cars, and did not mind being pushed around inside by the other passengers," he pointed out. "Because she understood and appreciated spiritual values."



7.

The Best Loved Citizen

DONÑA AURORA had done much, too much for the welfare of her country that even in her lifetime she was already showered with tokens of gratitude by the very people who were the beneficiaries of her great humanitarian accomplishments in the Philippines and abroad.

Government officials and men behind private entities vied with each other in honoring her by naming public projects after her and by conferring on her well-deserved honors which not only bespoke of her benevolence but also enhanced the prestige and dignity of her people. So fitting were the tributes paid Doña Aurora that she had become the most revered woman in the Philippines! Everywhere, from northern Batanes to southern Sulu, she was a popular figure by her deeds; she was known to all if not personally, at least by name. The more intimate persons to her still like to call her Doña Aurora, while others who still retain their high respect for her address her formally as Mrs. Quezon.

Most outstanding and eloquent manifestations of remembering Doña Aurora can be cited the renaming of the former town of Bondo in Quezon province to Aurora; the naming of the institute of education of the Quezon College in Manila after her; calling a barrio in Valencia, Bohol, after her; and christening the hospital in Baler with the name, Aurora Memorial Hospital.

The site on which Doña Aurora died was converted by the Government into a national forest reserve and named

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the Aurora Memorial Park. President of the Philippines Elpidio Quirino ordered the development of the area into a fitting memorial to her.

In Manila, Doña Aurora is remembered with the Aurora Boulevard in the northern part of the city, while in Quezon City there is the long and spacious Aurora Avenue. Doña Aurora was also instrumental in the formation of the Quezon City Lions Club which Mayor Ponciano A. Bernardo of that city later organized.

She was also the recipient of a number of honorary titles and degrees. In 1937 the Marygrove College in Detroit, Michigan, conferred on her the honorary degree of doctor of laws for humanitarian service "in recognition of her outstanding service to the cause of humanity." Two other leading institutions of learning in the Philippines awarded her the same scholastic honors. The Philippine Women's University conferred it on January 14, 1940, and the University of Santo Tomas gave it in March, 1940.

In its citation, the Philippine Women's University said, in part: "Born in Baler, Filipino by birth, heritage and aspiration, loyal worker for the social uplift of the underprivileged; leader in civic enterprises; guiding spirit in philanthropic movements; embodiment of domestic and civic virtues; pattern of pioneer qualities of mind and heart of the true Filipino; exponent of the best Filipino tradition. First Lady of the Land, she uses her position of power and influence not for any selfish ends but to promote the welfare of her countrymen. Her broad social sympathies, her profound piety, her deep love of country, her natural modesty, her democratic and virtuous demeanor, have truly endeared her to the Filipino people who look to her as a model wife and mother. The Philippine Women's University is privileged to acclaim her as the exemplar of the ideals of womanhood which this institution seeks to uphold and perpetuate."



One of the last family photographs of the Quezons taken in the United States of America. Standing from left, are Manuel, Jr. (Nanang), Mrs. Quezon, President Quezon, Maria Aurora (Bibi), and Maria Zenaida (Nini).

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On the other hand, the School of Nursing of the Philippine General Hospital in Manila awarded her an honorary diploma in nursing in 1935 "in recognition of her efforts to improve public health" and of "her service in nursing her husband." She was also the first honorary president of the Filipino Nurses Association, the members of which voted Doña Aurora as "an excellent nurse in her own right."

A song, entitled *Aurora*, has been composed by "Mimosa", a radio singer, in her honor; a Tagalog poem consisting of five stanzas, of four lines each, entitled *Aurora Aragon Quezon*, has been written in her memory by Jose Esperanza Cruz; an ocean passenger ship owned by the De la Rama Steamship Company has been named *Doña Aurora*; and life-size oil paintings of her, made by Fernando Amorsolo, the famous Filipino painter, decorate the social halls of the Philippine Women's University. The first likeness was unveiled by Mrs. Douglas MacArthur, charming wife of the supreme commander of the United Nations forces, before the outbreak of the World War II, and the second was unveiled by Vice-President of the Philippines Fernando Lopez on the occasion of the birthday anniversary of Doña Aurora in 1950.

During this celebration Don Andres Soriano announced his sponsorship of the "Aurora A. Quezon professional chair in community leadership and scholarships in social service" at the Philippine Women's University, while former Speaker Jose Yulo offered the sum of P2,000 to be given to the women winning in the biographical contest on the life of Doña Aurora to be conducted under the auspices of the same university.

While short articles and essays have been written about Doña Aurora in the newspapers and magazines of the country, yet this book is the only one to carry the full biography of Doña Aurora.

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An Aurora Quezon memorial medal was struck in the Philippines and given to the delegates attending the two-day national convention of the Philippine National Red Cross in 1949. At the same time a bronze plaque on which were inscribed the name of Doña Aurora as chairman and those of the other officers and members of the first board of governors of the Philippine National Red Cross was placed at the concrete building of the national offices of the Philippine National Red Cross shortly after her tragic death.

On its part, the Quezon City Red Cross named its headquarters building located on the Bernardo Park in Quezon City the Aurora Aragon Memorial Hall, in accordance with the resolution of the board of directors of the Quezon City Red Cross chapter of which Nicanor Roxas, at the time acting mayor of Quezon City, was the chairman. At the ceremonies on the occasion of the laying of the cornerstone, President of the Philippines Elpidio Quirino, who was the guest speaker, appealed to his audience to emulate the "charitable work of Doña Aurora who gave of her life the true meaning of charity."

The Women's International League (WIL) decided to have the likeness of Doña Aurora on Filipino semi-postals, thereby making her the first Filipino woman in the Philippine philatelic history to be so honored. The proceeds of the sale will be used in building an arch of peace.

There was also a plan in the Congress of the Philippines, sponsored by Congressman Fortunato Suarez of Quezon, to create the sub-province of Aurora in honor of Doña Aurora. Located in Quezon province, it would include the following northern towns: Infanta, General Nakar, Polillo, Bordeos, Baler, Maria Aurora, and Casiguran.

In recognition of her distinguished service to the Philippines, a merit award for Doña Aurora was posthumously given by the Civic Women's Assembly in connection with

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the observance of the third anniversary of the grant of independence to the Philippines, held on July 3, 1949. The award was pinned by President Quirino on her surviving daughter, Maria Zeneida (Nini), during the solemn ceremonies which were attended by a big cosmopolitan crowd. The citation accompanying the award reads as follows:

"First Lady of the Philippines from 1935 to 1944, whose interest and activity in human welfare and public affairs continued even after the expiration of the term of office of her husband, President Manuel L. Quezon of the Commonwealth of the Philippines.

"By her example of personal conduct she enhanced the prestige and dignity of Filipino womanhood in the Philippines and abroad.

"As chairman of the Philippine National Red Cross, she won for this humanitarian organization both national and international esteem and recognition; and through her wise guidance and direction enabled it to render extensive and valued services to the whole nation.

"Through her personal and official interpretation and endorsement of many other civic and welfare organizations, in which she served as Honorary President, she opened the eyes of the public to an appreciation of the value of organized social work.

"Without expectation of gain or reward, up to her untimely death she dedicated her time, energy, money, and even life itself in service to her country and people, thus stimulating voluntary citizen participation as an essence of the democratic way of life."

END

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